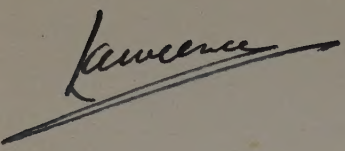

THE LIFE OF MOSES

EDMOND FLEG

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY STEPHEN HADEN GUEST

THE LIFE OF MOSES

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

EDMOND FLEG is a poet, so that to translate any of his works would be hard enough ; but this work—the vision of Moses, the man of God, as it has come down through four thousand years of Jewish tradition—presents two peculiar difficulties. First, the problem M. Fleg has himself solved so exquisitely, but which has to be solved anew in a translation, of combining into a harmonious style the loftiest passages of the Bible, and the vivid, half-magical imaginations of some of the early Palestinian and Babylonian Rabbis, and the profound enigmatic mysticism of some, and the shrewd, practical, juristic, or everyday commentary of others. Secondly, a problem arising exclusively for the translator into *English*, the language of the Authorised Version.

The first problem[1] confronts every writer who treats of the magnificent language of the Hebrew Bible, wherein much is left to be worked out by the imagination of the hearer, in conjunction with the fuller, more elaborated style of the Rabbis. The second problem is, that in certain parts of the book the translator cannot but suffer direct comparison with the inspired Authorised Version ; for sometimes the first half of a sentence is taken from the Bible word for word, and the second half is an addition, with or without transmutation, from the Midrash, or an original extension of the Biblical idea by M. Fleg himself ; and sometimes one of the best-known Biblical passages is taken, and so paraphrased or expanded by the inclusion of

[1] This question is admirably discussed in the Introduction to *The Parables and Similes of the Rabbis: Agricultural and Pastoral*, by Rabbi Asher Feldman. A most interesting work.

material from the Tradition, that the Bible narrative cannot be used in a conscientious rendering, though its majestic reverberation in the reader's memory must inevitably make the paraphrase seem somewhat flat.

And this great—and in part insuperable—difficulty exists only for the translator into English. For the French Bible, though it has unique beauties of its own—*Comme un cerf brame après des eaux courantes, ainsi mon âme soupire après toi, ô Dieu !*—is, as a whole, nothing more than a reverent, dignified rendering of an obviously foreign idiom. But, with the possible exception of the Lutheran Bible, the Authorised Version alone in the world has influenced the whole literature, the whole imagination of a people for three hundred years : so that the Star of Jacob, and the burning bush, and the law for the widow and the fatherless, are become part of the poetic fibre of the English language. When, therefore, that part of Balaam's prophecy immediately preceding the Star of Jacob is given in unfamiliar form, the reader cannot but feel a certain loss and confusion. Yet perhaps there is some compensation even here, for new elements are added to the familiar narrative, and the very strangeness may, as with the retranslations of the Bible into modern idiom, serve to make the Authorised Version fresher and clearer.

Thus the translator was in great uncertainty as to what idiom to adopt : for the language of the Authorised Version could not be intermingled in the same paragraph with a simple, though poetic, modern prose, as could the French Bible with the modern French : and on the other hand, such archaisms as *thee* and *thou* and *ye*, for *you*, throughout the book, and *hath* for *has* when the Lord or the Prophets speak, seemed essential, in order to suggest this distant time.

Such modern versions of the Bible as Dr. Moffatt's, sincere and illuminating as they are, offer less help than might be thought. The translators of the Authorised

Version, to whom the Bible in the vulgar tongue was still a strange thing, whereas to the Jews it had been daily bread through the centuries, sometimes refused to see that certain passages in the all-inclusive Book were prosaic, and meant to be prosaic ; they were determined to exalt every part to the utmost intensity, thereby sometimes mistranslating ; but the present-day translator who calls the Princes *Sheikhs*, and the Elders *Notables*, and mitres *turbans*, with syntax to match, really misrepresents far more seriously, however great his scholarship and his piety : for the Bible is God's Word to His people, and the total effect, in English as in Hebrew, should be the highest attainable majesty. The translator has, however, followed Dr. Moffatt[1] to a certain extent, for example by using *Eternal* in a good many places where the Authorised Version has the *Lord* (which should, really, be used relatively infrequently), and when *Pharaoh* or the *Egyptians* are speaking, by using *Hebrews* instead of *Israelites*.

For the Rabbinic names he has adopted the modern spelling, using *h* for *ch* : this *h* should be pronounced something like the final *ch* in the Scots *loch*. Various technical matters have been referred to Mr. Paul Goodman and to Mr. Jacob Hodess, scholars to whom the translator's sincere thanks are due ; but he alone is responsible for the renderings chosen.

This tedious list of the difficulties that were to be overcome is not meant to excuse the translator, but to do justice to M. Fleg's achievement. In a style apparently very simple, almost, at times, naïve, yet most subtly woven of clear, almost Greek perception, and deep, imaginative sympathy, he does make Moses, the man of God, at whose death the earth and the heaven and the Lord God Himself wept, saying, *There shall be no other Moses*, emerge from the ages a figure no less majestical than in the Bible story. But

[1] *A New Translation of the Bible*, by James Moffatt, D.D., D.Litt., M.A.

his most sensitive modern mind, penetrating the ever-living tradition of four thousand years, reveals, through all the legends, the "simple man, humble in his heart," wistful in his human affections.

S. H. G.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I HAVE the utmost respect for the learned. If, leaving aside the question of a divine revelation, their methods could reconstruct for us a true life of Moses, I would read it very gladly. But, in the present state of *science*, all they could offer us as a life of Moses would scarcely be more than a mass of hazardous asseveration and unverifiable conjecture.

Must we, then, here simply repeat the Bible narrative, robbing it of its beauty? By no means. In the creative memory of Israel the Biblical Moses lives on, transfigured by a tradition rich in wonderful legends. Whilst *critical* exegesis, tracing back myths and rites to their supposed origins, would lead us to a primitive, savage Moses, wholly alien to our world of to-day, the religious, moral, poetical, and satirical exegesis of our Rabbis has, with its symbols and its anachronisms, drawn the prophet nearer to us from century to century. Doubtless the real life of Moses will never be known *scientifically* : but is not this life, as Israel has imagined it, interpreted it, and felt it through the ages, also history? And is this history ended? Has not Israel the right still to prolong it?

The very humble heir of the story-tellers of the Talmud, of their spirit and their language, gathering their scattered fables, re-grouping, re-thinking, and re-casting them, and, where need was, paraphrasing in my turn their paraphrases, I have tried to follow in their footsteps and continue after their fashion the tradition they have perpetuated, so that I might write this story as it now re-lives in me.

In this attempt to make the past live on into the present

I do not think I have in any way betrayed the spirit of the texts, but I have not troubled over much to follow them word for word. In the manner of our Rabbis, I have imagined and created, or sometimes added variants to the occasionally numerous versions they give us of a single episode. The experts may take offence. But at least let them know that I have acted from choice, not ignorance, and that my liberties with the Talmud in no way surpass the Talmud's own with the Bible.

EDMOND FLEG.

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THE LIFE OF MOSES

The life of Moses, the man of God, is in the Holy Scriptures. But, as our Talmud teaches, the word of the Lord has more than one meaning : beneath the sacred words they read and re-read, our Sages discovered many secrets not for the eyes of fools, and, beneath the known facts, many unknown, out of which they made the tales which made this tale.

CHAPTER I

PHARAOH'S DREAM

It is written : *There rose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph, and he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. . . .*

And concerning this our Teachers tell us that in the three hundred and fifty-third year after the coming of the children of Israel into the land of Egypt, Pharaoh dreamed a dream.

In this dream he was seated upon his throne, and he lifted up his eyes. Two fingers came out of the darkness, and between these fingers there shone a rod, longer than a sunbeam ; and there hung from this rod the two pans of a weighing-scales : one, which was below, was of gold, and vast as a continent ; the other, which was high up, was of plaited straw, and little as a bird's nest.

Then he saw upon the pan of gold the likeness of a river, and, going up from this river, harvests and harvesters, warriors and chariots, cities and pyramids, and, going up from these pyramids, kings and queens.

Then he saw upon the pan of straw a new-born child.

And the pan of gold, with the river and the harvests, the warriors and the cities, the pyramids and the kings, rose ; and the pan of straw came lower, came lower as if the child were heavier than all the land of Egypt, all its harvesters, all its warriors, and all its kings.

In the anguish of his heart Pharaoh awoke : it was a dream. He called his counsellors and told them his dream.

Now, according to Rabbi Simon, these counsellors were

three prophets : Balaam, son of Beor, from the land of the Two Rivers ; Job, the man of Uz ; and Jethro, the Midianite. For, our Doctors say, the nations, just like Israel, have prophets to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, shows the truth ; but they cannot see in it, as can the prophets of Israel, the heart of the Eternal.

Balaam, son of Beor, spoke first, and said : " A mother comes and goes about her business, who bears within her womb the liberator of Israel. Have a care, O King : He will destroy this land with all who dwell in it, if thou do not first destroy Israel."

" Destroy Israel ? " Pharaoh answered him, " We have long spoken of it. When thou camest to say to me, with the master of my chariots : ' Rise up against the sons of this people, who dwell amongst thy people, before they become too numerous, and make alliance with thine enemies,' I replied, thou rememberest : ' Fools that ye be. Our ancestors were saved from famine by Joseph, their ancestor; without these Hebrews we would not be eating now ; and you would have me rise up against them ? ' What did my warriors then ? They seized away my throne and my crown, until I had said : ' Be it so : I will rise up against these Hebrews.' I took their corn and their fields : they ceased not to increase and multiply. I bowed them beneath the whip of the slave-master, I made them bake bricks in the sun, roll down the stone for the pyramid, dig canals for the abundance of my waters, and raise walls around my cities : they ceased not to increase and multiply. I ordered their midwives to strangle their children as they were delivered from the womb : they ceased not to increase and multiply. They were seventy when they came with Jacob into the land of Egypt ; now their number is six hundred thousand. And thou tellest me : ' Destroy the children of Israel.' Tell me how, rather."

Balaam, son of Beor, answered : " By fire we can in no

wise destroy them, for their God saved their father Abraham from the fire, and by fire He would chastise us. By the sword we can in no wise destroy them, for their God saved their father Isaac from the sword, and by the sword He would chastise us. By bondage we can in no wise destroy them, for their God saved from bondage their father Jacob, and by bondage He would chastise us. We shall destroy them by water. Their God, in truth, saved Noah from the Flood, but He will not chastise us by water, for He sware after the Flood that the waters should no more cover the earth. Wherefore, command that every son that is new-born to the Hebrew women be cast into the river."

Having heard these words, Pharaoh turned to Job the man of Uz, and asked him : " What thinkest thou of it ? " But Job looked up and looked down and answered no word. Then Pharaoh questioned Jethro the Midianite, who in his turn spoke, saying :

" Their God has sworn to unloose the flood upon the earth no more ; but has He sworn not to unloose it upon a part of the earth, upon Egypt ? Thou wast wise ; be wise again, O Pharaoh : let be these Hebrews. In bondage and humiliation they are still mighty, for mighty is their God."

" Thou wouldst have my crown seized from me once more ? " cried Pharaoh. " I have the bull-god, the jackal-god, the snake-god, the lion-god, the monkey-god, the crocodile-god—I have a thousand gods ; I am the lord of all these gods, and I shall be able to do naught against these Israelites, who have but one God ? From this day forth let all the new-born male children in Israel be taken, and let them be thrown into the river."

When he had spoken, the evil Balaam rejoiced in his heart ; Job was silent ; but Jethro the Midianite, fearing the anger of Pharaoh, fled from before his face into the land of Midian.

And, comments Rabbi Simon, because Job had not spoken, he was visited by great torments ; because Balaam had spoken for Israel's death, he died a bloody death ; and because Jethro had spoken for Israel's life, his sons' sons sat in the Sanhedrin.

CHAPTER II

THE CHILD SAVED FROM THE WATER

After the death of Joseph and his brethren, the Hebrews in the land of Egypt, grazing their flocks in the pastures of Goshen, had ceased to walk in the ways of the Lord. No longer carving in their children's flesh the Sign of the Covenant made by their Fathers with the Holy One, blessèd be He, they said : " Let us be like the Egyptians," and, like the Egyptians, they worshipped gods with animal faces. It was for this that the Lord had changed the love of the Egyptians into hate, and permitted that they should make their slaves of those who were no longer His servants.

One tribe alone, that of Levi, kept in their hearts the memories and hopes of Israel, and, among this tribe, a man righteous among the righteous : Amram, husband of Jochebed, father of Aaron and of Miriam. And upon the righteousness of Amram the whole world rested.

For, our Elders have taught us, God desires His Presence to dwell here below. Here It dwelt on the first day of the first man. But when Adam had sinned, It went up from the first into the second heaven ; and, fleeing one after the other from the generation of Enoch, of the Flood, of Babel, and of Sodom, It hid Itself in the third, then in the fourth, then in the fifth, then in the sixth heaven ; and when Sarah was defiled by Pharaoh, the Presence of God took refuge in the seventh heaven. But with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with Levi and Kohath, It had descended once more into the second heaven ; now, by Amram's virtue, It sojourned on the border of the first heaven ; and, lo ! soon,

with Moses, the Presence of God was again to inhabit the earth.

Meanwhile Pharaoh's edict was carried out ; the mothers of Israel, leaning over the waters, wept their sons, and the river flowed between their sobbing.

Then said Amram : " Since the Israelites beget for murder, let them cease to beget." And he divorced from Jochebed. And, doing as he had done, all the men in Israel repudiated their wives.

But the spirit of wisdom and vision was already upon Miriam. She dared to speak before Amram her father, saying : " Crueller than Pharaoh's is thy decree. The Egyptian condemns only the male children ; but thou strikest the daughters with the sons. He deprives his victims of earthly life only ; thou, who preventest them from being born, deprivest them also of the resurrection."

These words enlightened Amram ; doubtless he knew our proverb : *Thy child can give thee more than one lesson.* He told the Israelites to take back their wives, and he himself, taking back Jochebed, led her for the second time beneath the nuptial canopy. Miriam and Aaron danced at their new marriage-keeping, and thus was Moses conceived.

And now from month to month Jochebed regained her youth ; the lines vanished from her face, her limbs exhaled the fragrance of flowers, and her womb bore in joy the promise of its fruit. But Amram was sad in his heart. Before each Hebrew's house where a mother awaited the coming of a child, Pharaoh posted two armed guards ; and whosoever hid away a new-born male child from the watery death, he and all his house perished by the bloody death. And Amram thought : " If there is born to me a son, what will become of my son ? "

In the sleep of the night he, in his turn, had a dream. In this dream he was standing on the shore of the river : his

lowered eyes were looking at the waves, which, become pellucid, flowed like a river of air. At the bottom there lay, in thousands and in myriads, one against the other, the corpses of sucklings. Suddenly, behold, living, upon the bank, a child walking : his two small hands stretched out toward the water. Then something quivered among the corpses in the depths ; a motion passed through them, swayed them, raised them to their feet ; they quickened, they grew ; they came forth out of the waves ; they were men, they were a people who rose up and who sang : " He is born who delivereth us ; his name shall live in Eternity."

At the voices crying out Amram awoke. A light filled the room ; Jochebed, three months before the expected day, had given birth, but without pain ; for, say our sages, the curse with which Eve was cursed aforetime weighs not upon the virtuous mother. Miriam smiled, presenting the child, born circumcised, to his father ; and she prophesied, saying: " Behold the salvation of Israel ! "

Thrice the moon waxed and waned, and they had not revealed to the Egyptians the miraculous son. Now the day approached when his birth would be discovered ; they resolved to confide him to the waters of the river and to the protection of God. Jochebed made an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with pitch without and clay within. She put the child therein, having entreated the help of the Most High, and laid it, with trembling hands, among the flags by the river's brink. And while she, weeping, returned to Amram, Miriam upon the bank followed the ark with her eyes as the waves took it, and watched what would come of her prophecy.

What wonders hath Providence for Israel ! Who could have thought that Abraham would have begotten in his old age ?—that Jacob, having but a rod when he passed over Jordan, would return laden with riches and with blessings ? Who could have believed that Joseph, chained

in the prisons of Egypt, would one day reign over the Egyptians ? Who could have hoped that a child, lost upon the swell of a vast river, would save a people, and all mankind ? Yet that was Miriam's hope.

According to Rabbi Hanina bar Papa, that day was the twenty-first of the month of Nisan : and the ministering angels said before the Lord : " King of the World, wilt Thou permit that on this day of Nisan, whereon Thy Song of the Divided Waters is to be sung, there shall perish he who is to sing it ? "

According to Rabbi Aha bar Hanina, that day was the sixth of the month of Sivan ; and the ministering angels said before the Lord : " King of the World, wilt Thou permit that on this day of Sivan, whereon Thou art to give Thy Law on Sinai, there shall perish he who is to receive it ? "

While the angels were talking, Bithiah, the daughter of Pharaoh, came down to the river with her maidens. She was white with leprosy from head to foot ; and her leprosy made her barren. Each day she bathed in the waters of the river, wishing to leave in them her leprosy and her barrenness, which deprived Pharaoh of posterity and his crown of succession.

When she saw the slight thing floating upon the waves, Bithiah sent a maid to fetch it. The maid swam toward the thing ; and as she was slow to reach it, her arms, miraculously, were lengthened. And when Pharaoh's daughter had opened the ark, behold, in the ark was a light : the Presence of God ; and, beneath the light, a circumcised babe, an Hebrew. The maid said : " Mistress, wilt thou save an Hebrew ? When a king commands, his daughter obeys." But Bithiah was already touching the child with her hand, and, suddenly, the whiteness of leprosy fell from her flesh ; the princess was pure as the new-born babe. And she felt she would cherish him more than a son of her

womb. And she called him Moses, *The Withdrawn*, saying : " Because I drew him out of the water."

Miriam drew near. The babe needed a nurse. She suggested she should seek one out from among the mourning mothers of Israel ; for, say our Doctors, the mouth that was one day to converse with the Lord could not defile itself with the impure milk of an Egyptian. The nurse she brought was Jochebed. Bithiah confided to her him whom, in her heart, she had already placed upon the throne. Then, pretending to be big with child, she announced an heir to Pharaoh.

Custom decreed that he should not be presented at Court till the end of his third year, so that for three years Jochebed could cherish her redeemed son, rocking him to the songs of Israel, while Amram, Aaron, and Miriam in joy beheld his increasing beauty.

When the time had come, Bithiah, holding the child in her arms, went up the avenue of sphinxes that lead to the royal pylon. It was the day whereon the vanquished of the north and of the south brought to Pharaoh their tribute of ebony and palms, of turquoise and of incense, of ivory and of gold. On their knees before him, slaves, princes, priests, sorcerers snuffed up the dust. And amongst them Balaam and Job, the seers of the nations, who, abandoned by Jethro, now alone enlightened the king with their blind wisdom.

Smiling at the smile of his seed, Pharaoh wished to caress the child. But he, his small hands filled by an extraordinary strength, took the crown from the royal head and set it upon his own. " Here," said Pharaoh, " is a young prince exceeding urgent to reign ! " " He must," Balaam cried, " he must be thrown into the water ! " " Again ? Pharaoh answered him. Didst thou not read in the stars, more than three years ago, that the threatening child of my dream was

at last in the river? Since that day I have not drowned the children. And thou wishest me to begin the drowning once more?" "Strangle him, if thou preferest, answered Balaam, but save thy head from this ravisher of crowns."

"But does he know what he is doing, at his age?" murmured Bithiah. "And what dost thou think of it, Job?" Pharaoh demanded. Job looked up and looked down and answered: "If he know what he does, let him die. Let him live, if he know not." "But how can we know if he know or know not?" Job looked up and looked down and answered no word.

"Let two dishes be presented to him," said Balaam: "Upon the one let there be scattered burning coals; upon the other pieces of gold. If he take the coal, thy crown is safe—he knows not what he does. But if he take the gold, fear him; he has understanding."

Balaam thought that a child already so clever would not burn his fingers. And, in fact, the child did want to touch the gold. But the angel Gabriel, who was watching over him, turned aside his hand: Moses grasped a lighted coal and carried it to his mouth. Wherefore, say our Rabbis, he was slow of speech and of a slow tongue all the days of his life.

Bithiah uttered a cry. Pharaoh laughed a great laugh. Job, the prudent, returned to Uz, the city of his birth; and Balaam returned, vexed, to the land of the Two Rivers.

It was thus that Moses, through whom Egypt was to perish, became a prince over all the princes of the Egyptians.

CHAPTER III

THE SON OF BITHIAH

It is written : *And he became her son. . . .* But the childhood of this son, and his youth—what were they ? A Rabbi, who will not give us his name, recounts it to us, commenting Philo the thinker and Josephus the historian.

When Moses was come of age to learn, he had for masters, as future sovereign, the wisest readers of images.

Some taught him the names of the gods : Hathor, the fostering cow ; the bull Hap, born of a virgin heifer ; Anubis, the jackal that embalms the dead ; the hawk Horus ; the serpent Apepi ; Shu, the sun ; and the earth, Seb ; and Nut, the sky ; the nine gods of Memphis, the nine gods of Thebes ; all the gods of every space and place.

Moses learned the names of the gods. But at night, upon his ivory couch, there awakened in his heart the songs once sung by Jochebed, his foster-nurse, and they sang of a God that has no head of a beast, nor face of a man, nor starry rays, nor colour of sun, a God who is not seen, and who is everywhere, and Who Alone Is God.

Others taught him the history of the Pharaohs ; of those who had prisoned the Nile in its canals, and stored up in their garners the plentiful years ; of those who had hewn into colossi rocks of porphyry and seated statues in their temples ; of those who had annihilated whole peoples and trod the whole world beneath their feet.

Moses recited the history of the Pharaohs. But at night,

upon his ivory couch, the songs of Jochebed awoke in his heart, and sang of a people who had nor harvest nor statues nor slaves bowed beneath them, a people of slaves, suckled with anguish.

Others taught him the duties of kings, saying : " Don thy panoply of war : shatter the nations ; cut down figs and vines ; burn the cities ; massacre in myriads."

Moses repeated the duty of kings. But at night, upon his ivory couch, the songs of Jochebed awakened in his heart, singing : " Be prudent like Jacob, be gentle like Isaac, be faithful like Abraham."

Sometimes Bithiah, whom he believed his mother, took him to prayer. Farded with red, she presented the offering to the idol farded with blue. Moses did not pray ; he pondered : " How does one pray to the God whom one cannot see ? "

Sometimes the princes, whom he believed his cousins, took him to the games. They threw the disc or ball ; they advanced their pawns ; they shook the dice. Moses did not play. He pondered : " Where does this dolorous people suffer ? "

Sometimes Pharaoh, whom he believed his grandfather, took him to the Council of his counsellors. Seated upon his throne, the sovereign listened to the Elder of his priests, or the steward of his treasures. Moses did not listen. He pondered : " Of whom did they take counsel : Abraham the faithful, Isaac the gentle, Jacob the prudent ? "

When he was come of age to war, he received the mission of vanquishing the rebellious Ethiopians. For nine years the warriors of Egypt had vainly besieged their King, Kikanos, in his city of Sheba. To the east and to the north it was defended by high walls ; on the west a river protected it ; on the south, a space guarded by serpents.

A first Egyptian general had attacked the city by the

walls, felling forests to raise towers whence his archers shot their arrows. But Kikanos had shattered towers and archers beneath a hail of basalt.

A second, trying to take the city from the river, had built a fleet of rafts to cross the swift waters. But, drawn on by whirlpools to the cataracts, rafts and rowers had disappeared.

A third had advanced with his chariots among the serpents. But, writhing up into the air their millions of coils, whence gaped their mouths, the serpents had swallowed up horses and charioteers.

When Moses had brought up his fresh troops, Tharbis, the daughter of Kikanos, perceived him one day from the top of the rampart. Now he was of great stature and of a shining countenance. Tharbis loved him, and sent word to him : " Be my spouse. I give thee my city and my beauty." But Moses, in whom perpetually there sang the songs of Jochebed, remembered Sarah, who was a serving woman, and Rebecca and Rachel, who were shepherdesses ; and he did not desire for wife the daughter of a king.

His soldiers, having upon his orders captured countless ibises, loosed them upon the serpents, whose eyes and hearts they pierced. Moses and the army, traversing their undone corpses, entered the citadel. All Ethiopia was beneath the soles of his feet, and he returned into the land of Egypt bringing back treasures of ebony and of ivory, of plumes and of gems, of tame monkeys, and of dancing dwarfs.

Then Pharaoh, associating him in his throne, put in his hands the double whip, and upon his head the double crown. Followed by a cortège of warriors and of priests, standing upon his chariot of silver, he swept forth, acclaimed by the multitudes, through the kingdom of the south and the kingdom of the north.

One day, as he was going in his glory along the borders

of the land of Goshen, he saw beside the road men groaning. He was told : " These are Hebrews." He descended from his chariot ; he threw away his double whip and his double crown, and he went with the slaves.

Then a Voice spake from out the void saying : " Since thou leavest, for My people, thy royalty, since for them thou goest down into slavery, I will leave for thee My heaven : for thee will I come down upon earth."

Hard was their bondage. Throughout every day, through every night, the children of Israel toiled. Some, with straw and damped clay, moulded bricks ; others dug trenches which, ere yet scarce dug, filled again ; others again built houses and cities which, ere yet scarce raised, collapsed. Plague devoured them ; their thick-scattered corpses, that must not be wept nor buried, rotted upon the ground, the stench of the dead killing the living. And Moses thought : " What have they done, to deserve their wretchedness ? "

According to Rabbi Jehudah, ten strong things were created in the world : rock is strong, but iron cleaves it ; iron is strong, but fire melts it ; fire is strong, but water quenches it ; water is strong, but clouds bear it away ; clouds are strong, but winds drive them ; winds are strong, but man resists them ; man is strong, but fear casts him down ; fear is strong, but wine casts it out ; wine is strong, but sleep dissolves it ; sleep is strong, but death is stronger. And lovingkindness is stronger yet, for it survives death. Now Moses was filled with lovingkindness.

He said to the Israelites : " Brothers, brothers, alas for you, alas for me ! To save you from death, would that I might die ! " And for them he moulded bricks and bore burdens ; for them he buried the dead. The songs that Jochebed had once sung awoke in his heart, singing a Messiah of peace and justice, who shall come, one day, to

save mankind. And Moses pondered : " Why comes He not to save these Hebrews ? "

One night, as he sought to comfort their distress, other comfortings mingled with his own : Moses knew again the voice of Jochebed. With Amram, Aaron, and Miriam he journeyed throughout the land of Goshen, all four reminding the children of Israel of the invisible God they had forsaken. But the Israelites would not listen ; they spat upon them to show their disgust ; or else, drunk with sudden folly, they laughed and leapt and somersaulted ; or else, they gathered the piled bricks and threw them at the heads of those who brought them God. And Moses pondered : " Is this why they deserve their wretchedness ? "

Then he learned from his father and mother the secret of his birth, the ark of rushes saved from the waters, Pharaoh's decree, the centuries of bondage, the forgotten greatness of Jacob and of Joseph, the land of milk and honey trod by the Patriarchs and promised by God to their seed. He learned that a saviour would arise for Israel. Miriam prophesied : " Thou wilt be this saviour." But he did not believe her ; for he was a simple man, and humble in his heart.

CHAPTER IV

THE FLIGHT INTO MIDIAN

It is written : *Moses saw an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew. . . .*" Our Sages have said of this : "Consider the instinct of evil ; it is willed by God ; for, without willing it, it serves the will of God."

Pharaoh had placed over each ten Israelites an Israelite as foreman—Dathan, son of Pallu, was one of them ; and over each ten Israelite foremen an Egyptian taskmaster ; Maror the Egyptian was one of them. These taskmasters were all cruel, and Maror crueller than all.

Now Dathan had a wife, Shelomith, daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan ; Shelomith was beautiful ; Maror coveted her. One day, before dawn, he came, had Dathan put in chains, and, in front of him, took his pleasure of Shelomith's beauty. Dathan repudiated his wife. But from that day Maror was yet more cruel ; he struck Dathan, he sought his death. Moses, having seen this injustice, raged in his soul : as Maror raised his whip over Dathan, he slew him.

How could Moses kill, our Rabbis ask ? Is it not written : *Thou shalt not kill ?* But, they answer, Moses had thought in his anger of the justice of God ; and this thought was so strong that it slew the Egyptian.

When he was dead, Moses hid him in the sand, saying to the Israelites : " Israel is compared to the sand : as the sand is dumb, so let your mouths be dumb."

But they were not. On the next day Dathan disputed with Abiram, his brother. Now quarrelling comes from

hatred and leads to hatred. Moses chided them. " Young man," Dathan answered him, " who has made thee judge over us? Intendest thou to kill us as thou killedst the Egyptian? Or must we go to ask Pharaoh why thou art called the son of Bithiah, when thou art the son of Jochebed? "

And Dathan, whose life Moses had saved, did go up to Pharaoh's palace, and appeared before him, accusing Moses : " He dishonours thy sceptre and thy crown," he said. " Much good may it do him," answered Pharaoh. " He strengthens thine enemies, he succours thy slaves." " Much good may it do him," answered Pharaoh again. " He is not the son of thy daughter ; his father is an Hebrew." At these words Pharaoh, his nostrils swollen with rage, commanded that Moses should be seized, and that he should be put to death. And when the son of Amram had heard what Dathan had done, he cried out : " O Israel, Israel, thy soul is more wretched than thy bondage ; I know now wherefore thou hast deserved thy wretchedness."

Meanwhile the angels, extending their wings toward the Throne On High, beseeched the Holy One, blessèd be He : " Lord, Lord, King of the World, Thy son is in sore distress ; his doom is sealed ; his scaffold is reared up ; wilt thou let perish him who is to save Thy people? " The Holy One answered them : " I take him under My protection." And when Pharaoh sent out his spies to take Moses, God made some dumb, others blind ; the blind could not see where he was ; the dumb, who had seen, could not speak ; and Moses fled into the land of Midian.

Now Jethro, the counsellor who had counselled Pharaoh to spare the Israelites, had become priest in Midian. But having pondered in his heart, and understood that the Idol was vanity, he had given it back to the Midianites, saying : " I am too old : seek another priest." Then the Midianites

had put an interdict upon him ; none would serve him ; his seven daughters were his only servants, leading his flocks to pasture in the wilderness and to drink at the wells.

Every evening they arrived first, and drew water for their sheep. But the evil shepherds of Midian, having come up, chased them away and watered their own beasts with the water they had drawn. And on a day these shepherds were yet more evil ; having taken the water, they wished to take the maidens also, and, as they resisted, throw them into the well. At that very moment Moses drew near, heavy with his long journey. He saw near the town the well, and near the well the maidens being forced. Alone against all he defended them ; then he watered Jethro's flocks, and then those of the shepherds of Midian, although they had in no wise deserved it : in the same way, our Teachers say, he watered with the water of his Law, which later he gave Israel to drink—the rest of the world also.

Consider how modest is God. Before creating man, He consulted the angels. Moses was modest like God. The daughters of Jethro having said to their father : " An Egyptian saved us," he did not correct them, saying : " I am an Hebrew." Why ? Did he want to hide that he was an Hebrew ? In no wise : but it is like that man whom a serpent had bitten ; he ran to put his feet into water, and saw that a child had fallen in. He put out his hand and saved the child, who said to him : " Without thee I would have lost my life." " Not so," answered the man, " the serpent that has bitten me, and that I fled, going toward the water wherein thou didst fall, it is he who has saved thee, not I." In the same way, Moses thought : " The Egyptian, because of whom I have fled Egypt, going toward the well of Midian where shepherds were forcing these maidens—it is to him, not to me, that they should give thanks as their saviour."

Amongst the daughters of Jethro, Zipporah was the most modest. Looking upon her, Moses thought of Sarah, who was a serving woman, of Rebecca, of Rachel, who were shepherdesses, and he asked her to be his wife. She replied : " My father has a tree in his garden. Each man who desires one of us for wife, he commands him to pull it up ; and each one who tries to pull it up, the tree devours him. Wilt thou try to pull up the tree ? "

Now this tree was the rod which the Holy One, blessèd be He, had made on the eve of the first Sabbath, and which Adam, the first man, received when he was expelled from Paradise ; Adam transmitted it to Enoch, who transmitted it to Noah, who transmitted it to Shem ; then the rod came into the hands of Abraham, then of Isaac, then of Jacob, who supported himself upon it when he came into the land of Egypt, where he gave it to Joseph, the best beloved of his sons. After the death of Joseph, the rod was taken to Pharaoh's treasury, and thence had Jethro taken it, when he departed from the land of Egypt into the land of Midian. And one day, when he was walking in his garden in Midian, Jethro, unnoticing, had struck the earth with the rod ; and of a sudden the rod took root in the soil, and became a tree whence hung fruits.

Moses said : " Where is this tree ? " He went into the garden, and pulled up the tree ; and of a sudden the tree became a rod again, having, as on the eve of the first Sabbath, the colour of sapphire, which it had from heaven, and having, graven upon its top, the Name of the Holy One, blessèd be He, that none here below had as yet uttered.

Then Jethro thought in his heart : " This man is surely one of the sons of that Abraham through whom so many blessings are to come to the world." He embraced Moses, and said to him : " Take my daughter ; be my son. But swear that thou wilt never do as did Jacob, thy forefather, who, having espoused the daughters of Laban, one day

fled again from Laban's house." Moses sware, and became the spouse of Zipporah ; she bore him a son and he named him Gershom, *A Stranger There*, saying : " I was a stranger there, and there was I blessed."

Now, say our Teachers, if Maror had not coveted Shelomith, if Dathan had not betrayed Moses, Moses would never have fled into the land of Midian, and he would never have known there what God wanted of him. But Maror coveted Shelomith, Dathan betrayed Moses, and Moses fled into the land of Midian, and there knew what God wanted of him. Thus the instinct of evil did, without wishing it, the will of the Eternal.

CHAPTER V

THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERD

Moses pastured Jethro's flocks, watching over them lovingly. First he led forth to pasture the beasts that were youngest, so that they should feed upon the tender grasses, then the older beasts, who found a stronger herbage, then lastly the most vigorous, who browsed upon the toughest forage. Then said God : " He hath learned how to shepherd sheep, giving to each his sustenance ; he will learn how to shepherd My people, giving to each his right."

One day a kid escaped from the flock. Moses hastened after it to a rocky place where he found it drinking at a spring. " Poor kid," he said to it, " thou didst flee in order to drink ? Surely thou art now full weary." He took it on his shoulder and brought it back to the flock. Then God said : " Since he hath had pity upon a poor kid, bearing it upon his shoulder to take upon him its weariness, then will he have pity upon My poor people, bearing them in his heart to take upon him their sin."

For God, before entrusting the flocks of men to His kings and His prophets, entrusts to them, to try them, the flocks of His beasts.

But the bondage of Egypt weighed more heavily each day upon the children of Israel. Pharaoh, wroth at knowing Moses was their brother, punished them for his past mistake. To bring him to repentance, God sent him a sickness of leprosy. From the crown of his head to the soles of his feet he was covered with pustules. But he knew not how to

read in his suffering the message of the Most High, and instead of his soul, he sought to heal his body. Every morning, for ten years, he had ten Hebrew children torn from the arms of the mothers of Israel, and every morning for ten years he bathed in their blood. But neither his soul nor his body was healed : when he died he could not be embalmed ; his skin fell away in filth and his stench rotted the unguents.

The Pharaoh who came after him was the son of that Bithiah who had saved Moses from the waters. She, being cured of her barrenness, had conceived this firstborn of her flesh after Moses, the firstborn of her spirit, had fled to Jethro. Yet despite her prayers, the new Pharaoh was even crueller than the old, for no leprosy tormented him : his only torment was his cruelty. Every evening at his meat he threw ten of the Hebrew children to his dogs ; and while he ate, he looked upon his dogs as they devoured them. Then the cry of the mothers rose up to God : not that the Israelites deserved to be saved, for their sins were countless ; but the Lord remembered His promise to the Patriarchs, and wished that from this people's infamy there should be born for all peoples a blessing.

Amram was dead : Moses' hour had come ; for, say our Sages, when the sun of a righteous man goes down, at once the sun of another shines out. And the faithful shepherd, grazing Jethro's flocks, went farther into the desert each day : a force drew him thither—he sought the presence of God ; and to receive in oneself the Presence of God, one must make within oneself a desert.

One day, in the midst of the wilderness, he saw a mountain of granite and of sapphire ; and as he went toward it, it came toward him. This mountain is called by several names : by the name of *Hatred*, Sinai, for from it came down Hatred of sin ; by the name of the *Sword*, Horeb, for from

it came down the Sword of justice ; by the name of the *Advent*, Bâ-sham, for upon it came the Lord.

When Moses stopped at the foot of the mountain, the mountain likewise stopped. Then he beheld a bush of thorns, and in the bush, a fire ; the fire burned, yet the bush was not consumed. And in this bush of thorns the Presence of God appeared to him.

Why in a bush of thorns, ask our Doctors ?

Rabbi Eliezer answers : " Because the thorn-bush is the humblest of trees, and Israel the humblest of peoples."

Rabbi Johanan replies : " Because the thorn-bush is the hedge of gardens : and Israel is the hedge of the world."

Rabbi Joshua replies : " Because the thorn-bush is the dolorous tree, and God suffers when the children of Israel suffer."

And why did the fire burn within the bush, and yet the bush itself was not consumed ? Rabbi Nahman replies : " Because grief is in Israel, but God does not wish it to consume Israel."

Moses was not yet a prophet ; so he could not yet hear God's voice. If the Eternal had spoken with His voice of thunder, Moses would have been terrified ; if He had spoken in his still small voice, Moses would not have heard Him. What did God ? To speak to Moses He took the voice of Amram, Moses' father, calling him : " Moses, Moses ! "

Moses answered : " What wouldst thou, my father ? Here am I." " I am not thy father," said God then ; " I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." And Moses rejoiced in his heart, thinking : " God sets my father among the Patriarchs, and even before the Patriarchs ! " But, fearing to behold the Lord, he covered his face.

Upon this point Rabbi Joshua bar Karha and Rabbi Hosea were not of the same opinion. The first said : " Moses did wrong to hide his face, for, if he had not hidden it, God

would have shown him, then and there, what is On High, and what is below, what has been and what is to be." The second said : " Moses did well to hide his face, for God said to him : " Since thou honourest Me by hiding thy face, upon My life I will speak to thee face to face all thy life long." And in truth, whereas He spoke to the other prophets only in certain hours, and through veils or mirrors, the Lord from that hour forth conversed with Moses in every hour, speaking to him face to face.

God continued, " The cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me : and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Now therefore go : I send thee unto Pharaoh ; bring forth My people out of Egypt, and lead them unto this mountain, where they shall know Me, and into that country flowing with milk and honey which I promised to their fathers."

But Moses found not in his heart the courage to obey, and for seven days he resisted the will of the Eternal.

The first day he said : " Lord, who am I, to bring forth Thy children of Israel ? A shepherd lost in the wilderness." God answered : " The weaker he whom I use, the more he showeth My strength."

The second day Moses said : " Lord, Thou sendest me unto Thine enemies : they have sought my life ; they seek it yet." And God answered : " He with whom I go, My Fear goeth with him."

The third day Moses said : " I, Thy servant, hesitate to obey Thee : how then shall Pharaoh obey me ? I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue. Wherewith shall I dare to find words to speak to him ? " And God answered : " Did Adam know how to speak when he gave names unto all the beasts of the field ? Who, then, made him speak ? I open the eyes of them who see, and I close the eyes of them who see not. To those who hear I give hearing ; and from those who hear

not I take hearing away. I have made the mouth, whence cometh the word ; thou wilt speak, if My Word is in thy mouth."

The fourth day Moses said : " Thou hast sworn to their fathers to save their children ; and now Thou wouldst have me save them ! To save Lot, who was but a man, Thou didst send an angel ; to save Hagar, who was but a woman, Thou didst send an angel ; to save Isaac, who was but a child, Thou didst send an angel. Yet wouldst Thou have me, who am but a man, and more cowardly than woman or child, to save a whole people ! Save them, O Lord, Thyself ; or else send Thine angel ; or, if Thou must have a man, send Thy Messiah, the Messiah of Thy peace and justice ! " And God answered : " He shall come in the end of days ; thou art His beginning. Assuredly I could save them out of Egypt on the four wheels of My heavenly chariot, or bear them away on the wings of My Seraphim, who are myriads upon myriads. But thee it is that they await and that I await. The thing is in thy hand : if thou dost not accomplish it, it shall not be accomplished. I would that thou shouldst wish this thing, but I will not constrain thee : man must work with God to accomplish God's work."

The fifth day Moses said : " Lord, Lord, do they deserve salvation ? Are they not defiled with sin ? And God answered : " Put thine hand into thy bosom, and then take it out." He put in his hand, and took it out : it was leprous. " Put it into thy bosom again, and then pluck it out." He did it, and his hand was purified. And God said again : " As I can take away the leprosy from thine hand, so can I take away their sin from their souls."

The sixth day Moses said : " But how am I to feed them on the long march ! Where shall I find meat and drink for a whole people ? They have no provision but tears and lamentation, and the road that leadeth unto Thee goeth through a desert." God answered : " Was there wheat,

when there was no earth ? When the heavens were not, was there water ? He who brought forth from the void heaven and earth can bring forth from the desert water and bread."

The seventh day Moses said : " But if I follow Thee, will they follow me, O Lord ? Will they believe me, if I believe Thee ? Give me a sign, so that they shall follow me : tell me Thy Name, that they may believe me." And God answered : " My Names are numberless as My Powers. In My might I am called Sabaoth ; in My long-suffering, El Shaddai ; in My justice, Elohim ; in My mercy, Adonai. But look thou upon the Four Unutterable Signs I have graven upon thy rod of sapphire ; they contain the Name that containeth all My names and My powers, which signifieth : I AM THAT I AM.[1] Go, say unto the children of Israel : I AM is with me."

Then Moses arose and desired to go. But see how faithful to his word was the faithful shepherd : even while he accomplished God's command, he remembered his promise to Jethro, and did not leave him as Jacob had fled Laban. He said to him : " Give me my wife and my two sons, that I may go to deliver the Hebrews." Jethro answered : " Wouldst thou have three slaves more to deliver ? Leave thy wife and thy sons. Go in peace to thy people, and in peace return again."

And Moses went forth alone, riding upon an ass. According to our Doctors this same ass had borne the wood of the burnt offering when our father Abraham went up to Moriah to offer up Isaac ; and this same ass shall bear the Messiah, when he shall come upon the world in the End of Days.

[1] Literally, in French and in Hebrew, *I Am He Who Is*. See Translator's Introductory Note.

CHAPTER VI

THE ROD OF SAPPHIRE

When the Lord had spoken to Moses His voice had divided into two voices ; while one said to him in the burning bush : " Rise up from the wilderness and go into Egypt," the other spoke to Aaron in the bondage of Goshen, saying : " Rise up from Egypt and go into the wilderness." Each obedient, they met on the way, and embraced. It is for this that it is written : *Mercy and truth meet, justice and peace embrace.* For Moses was truth and Aaron was mercy ; Aaron brought peace and Moses justice. And Moses that day was four score years old, and Aaron on that day four score and three.

The faithful shepherd told his brother what God wanted of them : they came to Goshen, and assembled the Elders of Israel, and told them the matter. Then a cry went up from their bondage : " Save us, Moses, save us ! " He who made bricks cried to him, and he who digged trenches ; he who bore the straw cried, and he who bore the stone ; he who was building houses, and he who was building cities ; and, next the rotting dead, the dying also cried : " Save us ! Save us ! " And they thought : " This god of whom they spake to us and whom we saw not . . . if He *were* God ? . . . Perchance He sendeth us a saviour." And faith was born in their hearts.

For Israel, our Sages say, is like the olive ; when ripe on the tree, it is taken away, and carried to the press, and put under the mill, and milled, and bound with ropes, and loaded with stones : then it gives forth oil. Likewise with

the children of Israel : the peoples of the earth take them, then they strike them, then they fasten upon them chains and yokes, and stifle them in their prisons, and crush them beneath their feet : then Israel gives forth, like precious oil, its prayer to God.

But the Israelites were not all slaves. Some added acre to acre, harvest to harvest, traded in copper, in jewels, in porphyry. At ease in their gardens of tumbling waters, in their halls where idols were painted upon the walls, they had for friends the sons of Egypt ; like them they went bare-foot and bare-shouldered, with farded skin ; and like them they called themselves, instead of Phanuel, Peniel, or Osiel, Meti, Teti, or Atoti.

The richest of all, Korah, son of Izhar, of the family of Kohath, called himself Koracti to the Egyptians ; and great was his name over Egypt, for he was Pharaoh's treasurer, as once had been Joseph, and he kept all the keys of all his treasures.

But his riches were not a gift of the Holy One, blessèd be He, as Joseph's before him ; for Joseph stored up for all, Korah for himself alone ; and when Joseph passed by, the daughters of kings threw him from their windows rings and necklaces ; but when Korah passed by, the children of the poor turned in the street to spit upon him.

Now when they heard Moses' intention and the hope of their brethren, these Hebrews whose heart was with Egypt were filled with great fear. They thought : " If Pharaoh would keep his Hebrew slaves, peradventure his anger will turn against us, and if he would let them go, peradventure he will banish us with them." And Korah sent as his envoy among the slaves of Goshen, Dathan, who whispered into their ears : " Wherefore would ye depart ? Korah is mighty over Pharaoh's might : he will lighten your bondage." And the children of Israel said one to another : " Wherefore should we depart ? "

Meanwhile for seven days the Elders had debated whether or not they would follow Moses toward the Promised Land. Some said : " Ganon, son of Eran, desired to lead thither the sons of Ephraim these forty years since. Where did they arrive ? Their bones rot in the wilderness." Others answered them : " They had not for guide a man sent from God." Some said : " How should Moses save us ? I have computed, according to the prophecies, the days and the months and the years : the time is not come." The others answered : " How should he not save us ? I have computed, according to the prophecies, the years and the months and the days : the time is come."

After a week came Pagiel the son of Ocran, of the tribe of Asher, saying : " Jacob, as he died, whispered to Joseph his son the secret of the Sign which the saviour shall bear : Joseph, as he died, whispered it to his brethren ; Asher, the last of the brethren, as he died whispered it into the ear of Serah, my mother ; my mother is two hundred years old, and she is about to die. Come ; and let Serah my mother reveal to the Elders the secret of the Sign, before she die."

They came. In her clay hut, upon her bed of pain, Serah was already giving up the ghost ; her dead eyes could no more see, and her dead mouth whispered : " A rod . . . of sapphire. . . . And upon the rod . . . a name . . . graven. . . . And this Name . . . " She said no more. The seventy Elders looked upon Moses. In his hand he held the rod, and on the rod was the Name. Then they said : " Let Moses and Aaron lead us. With them we will all speak before Pharaoh's face." And they went up, Moses and Aaron going before, the seventy Elders going after.

Pharaoh's palace had a hundred gates, and, before each gate, an army : when they saw the hundred gates and the hundred armies, twenty of the Elders trembled and fled.

Pharaoh's palace had a hundred courts, and in each court a lion ; when they saw the hundred courts and the hundred lions, twenty-six of the Elders groaned and fled.

In Pharaoh's hall was Pharaoh. And when they saw Pharaoh, the twenty-four who remained paled and fled.

It was for this, our Doctors comment, that, when Moses and Aaron went up into Sinai, God forbade the Elders to follow them.

On that day Pharaoh was feasting the anniversary of his sovereignty. All the kings of the earth had come, and, prostrate, had set their crowns beneath his feet, crying : " Thou art god over all the earth." Moses and Aaron said : " Thus saith the Lord God of Israel : Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness." " Since when have slaves had a god ? " Pharaoh answered. " The Eternal, say ye ? I know not this god." And, turning to the seventy scribes, who knew the seventy tongues of earth, he asked them : " Know ye a god who is called the Eternal ? " They answered : " We have sought in all the books written in all the languages the names of all the gods : the Eternal is not God." " Ye sought Him amongst the dead," Moses and Aaron answered ; " our God is a living God." " How old is He ? " asked Pharaoh. " How long hath He reigned ? What cities hath He conquered, what lands hath He subdued ? "

Moses and Aaron answered : " Before the world, He Was ; after the world, He shall reign. When He goeth in mercy, mercy is His girdle, and love is His crown. But when He goeth in justice, fire is His bow, flame is His arrow ; the clouds are His buckler, the lightning His sword ; the sky is His chariot's canopy, the earth is its pavement." " If He is Almighty," said Pharaoh, " let Him give a sign of His might." Then Aaron, taking the rod of sapphire from Moses' hands, threw it on the ground, and it was changed into a serpent.

Why into a serpent ? our Rabbis ask. Because the serpent, like Pharaoh, had blasphemed the Lord God.

But when he saw the serpent, Pharaoh laughed a great laugh, saying : " Ye would teach magic unto the Egyptians? If those are the miracles of your God, the littlest children of my littlest sorcerers can do as much." And in sooth, out of ten parts of sorcery that the world has received, nine have been received by Egypt. Jannesh and Jambresh, the two sons of Balaam, who were Pharaoh's two greatest magicians, summoned all the children of all the magicians ; and they cast down upon the ground all their rods, which all became serpents. But Aaron's serpent swallowed up all the other serpents. Then Pharaoh, his nostrils swollen with his rage, cried out : " Slaves ! Ye would invent a god, to free yourselves from bondage ? I will teach you that the god of heaven and earth, it is I."

But the Eternal said : " Thou shalt come to know Him, this God whom thou knowest not."

To punish the Hebrews, Pharaoh ordered that every man should make a doubled quantity of bricks each day. In the evening, if a brick lacked, a child was torn from a mother in Israel, to replace it. And the men of Israel who were building houses and cities, had, in place of the missing bricks, to cover up with lime their children, with all their tears and weeping, and to bury them alive in the walls. And Dathan, Korah's envoy, whispered into the ears of the Israelites : " Ye see how Moses doth save you ! Say that ye desire not to depart, and Korah shall save you." And the Israelites said to Moses : " Let Korah protect us : we no longer desire to depart."

Then Moses cried out to the Eternal : " Alas, Lord, Thou didst say unto me that Thou wast a God merciful and long-suffering, and that Thou wouldst fulfil through me Thy promise to the Patriarchs. And I have scarce spoken Thy

Name before Pharaoh ere a greater evil hath come upon Thy people." God answered : " Alas, Moses, that My Patriarchs are no more upon earth ! They did not ask My Name, ere they served Me. I said to Abraham : ' I will give thee this land of My choice,' and, when he desired to bury Sarah there, he must needs buy the burying-place ; yet he complained not unto Me. I said to Isaac : ' I will give thee this land of My choice,' and when he wished for water there, he must needs strive with the herdsmen of Gerar ; yet he complained not unto Me. I said to Jacob : ' I will give thee this land of My choice,' and when he had to abandon it because of Esau's hatred, he complained not unto Me. But as for thee—I have told thee My Name, that holdeth all My power, and, at the first trial, thou lamentest. Were I Justice only I would punish thee : I am Mercy, I forgive thee. Go now. I send thee unto Pharaoh to enlighten him by My wonders ; but, however stiff-necked he may be, respect in him the King, and depart not with My people save when He shall permit it unto you. And I send thee unto Israel, to save My people by My wonders ; but however sinful they be, respect in them the People, and condemn them not save when their sin shall exceed My long-suffering."

Then, to enlighten Pharaoh and to save the children of Israel, the Holy One, blessèd be He, sent upon Egypt ten plagues.

CHAPTER VII

THE TEN PLAGUES

It is written : *I will multiply My wonders.* Of this our Sages have said : "The Lord is a Lord of Hosts." Now what does a lord of hosts when he would reduce his enemies ? He surrounds their citadel and cuts off their supply of water. If they surrender, it is well ; if not, he brings up his trumpets, which terrify them with their clamour. If they surrender, it is well ; if not, he brings up his bowmen, who let fly their arrows. If they surrender, it is well ; if not, he brings up his cohorts of every nation to show his might ; he slaughters their flocks, he pours boiling oil upon them, he hurls upon them balls of stone, he escalades their walls, he prisons them in their dungeons. If they surrender, it is well ; if not, he massacres their chieftains.

Thus did the Lord to the Egyptians. First He deprived them of water, changing the Nile into blood : they refused to let the Israelites go. Then He sent upon them the croaking frogs : they refused to let the Israelites go. Then He sent upon them the lice, which pierced them with their stings : they refused to let the Israelites go. He sent upon them flies of every kind : still they refused. He sent upon them the murrain of beasts : still they refused. He sent upon them the plague of boils and blains, the plague of hail that smote them with its hailstones, the locusts that climbed upon them as upon ladders : and still they refused. He sent them the darkness, that prisoned them in dungeons : they refused to let the Israelites go. Then, He slew their firstborn.

But see how the man of war differs from the God of war ;

the man of war, when he would destroy his enemy, attacks him by surprise ; he spaces not out his blows, and when he has him beneath his feet, he makes an end of him. But God warned Pharaoh ten times, and ten times gave him respite to repent, and, before punishing him, ten times He showed him His mercy.

Why, asks Rabbi Tanhuma, was it Aaron, and not Moses, who, upon God's command, struck the river, then the shore, changing the water into blood and into frogs, and then the sand into lice ? It was because the sand had saved Moses aforetime, by hiding the Egyptian whom Moses had slain ; it was because the water had saved Moses aforetime, by bearing his cradle. Could Moses have struck his saviours, the sand and the water ?

When the river was turned to blood, all the waters in all Egypt were turned into blood : the water in lakes and in springs and in pools ; the water in leather bottles and in ewers and in goblets. Did an Egyptian spit, his very spittle was blood. But whenever an Israelite drew or poured water, water it was still. What did then the Israelites whose heart was with Egypt ? They sold water to the Egyptians.

When the frogs came up from the river, one came up first, alone, and began to croak ; at his call all the others appeared, and covered all the land of Egypt. Did a drop of water fall upon a grain of sand ? Croaking, a frog came forth from it. Did a drop of spittle fall from an opened mouth, croaking, a frog came forth from it. Croaking, they swarmed into the fields and into the gardens, into the cellars and into the barns, into the wine-presses and into the kneading-troughs. They pullulated, croaking, over the statues, the markets, the pyramids, the open places. And when the porphyry of a palace stayed their march, they said, croaking to the porphyry : " Let us pass, that we may do the will of our Creator." Then the porphyry opened and

the frogs entered, climbed up the painted walls, and jumped, croaking, upon the ivory beds and into the golden vessels wherein the princes of the Egyptians ate. But at the frontier of Goshen the croaking frogs became silent ; and the Israelites in Goshen thought : " Could Korah work such a wonder ? "

The magicians of Egypt, imitating Aaron's miracles, had, like him, turned the water into blood, then into frogs ; but when he had turned the sand into lice, and made of all Egypt an unsealed tomb wherein the worms awaited the Egyptians, Pharaoh's magicians could still turn the dust into lice, but not the lice back into dust. Then Pharaoh said to Moses : "Let this plague cease ; entreat thy God and I will let the Israelites go, to sacrifice to Him in the wilderness." They entreated God ; the plague ceased. But Pharaoh kept not his word. " Return in seven days," he said ; " I will keep your women and children as hostages." For, our Sages comment, he was like those sinners who cry to the Lord God in their distress, but deny Him as soon as His compassion hath wearied of trying them.

Then, warning him each time, and each time finding his heart yet more hardened, Moses sent the flies, and the murrain of beasts, and the boils and blains.

Why flies of every kind ? asks Rabbi Jehudah. Because, but for Moses, idolaters of every race would have covered up Israel. Why the murrain of beasts ? Because, but for Moses, the cow and the ox, the goat and the lamb, the idols of the Egyptians, would have remained the gods of Israel. And why the boils and blains ? Because, but for Moses, idolatry, like an ulcer, would have eaten up Israel.

And when the flies were over Egypt, every clod of earth, every stone, every blade of grass, every leaf of every tree, was a moving army of flies and of ants, of fleas and of bugs, of cockroaches and of woodlice.

All the walls, all the roofs, all the ramparts of all the cities seemed but one surging mass. Men and women, the young and the old, beggars and princes were clothed from head to foot in the fœtid swarming. Then Pharaoh summoned Korah and the Israelites whose heart was with Egypt—who, with those in Goshen, had alone been spared—and said to them: "Are ye Egyptians or are ye Hebrews? Choose. Whence cometh this plague? From your brethren. Let it cease, or I drive you forth with them."

When the murrain came upon the cattle, the sheep at grass burst within their fleeces; the udders of the stifled kine gave forth bile; the carcases of the oxen encumbered the fields. And in the temples where the farded priests offered up to them sacrifices, Hapi, the ox, and Hathor, the cow, dissolved in corruption: and the Egyptians wept the death of their gods. Then Korah, with the Israelites whose heart was with Egypt, came and chided Moses, crying: "When wilt thou cease from whelming Pharaoh, *our* brother? Must we needs leave our country for a rabble of slaves?"

When the boils and the blains had made of every foot and every thigh, of every back and every breast, of every neck and every face a festering sore, the Israelites in Goshen, whose bodies stayed spotless, thought: "If it be a God who protecteth us, ought not our souls also to be purified before Him?"

But the Lord, perceiving that Pharaoh hardened his heart, hardened it yet more. Then came the hail, stoning the Egyptians; then the locusts, devouring them. Then the darkness.

In this darkness he who had lain down could not find place to stand up, and he who was standing could not find place to lay him down, for the darkness was thick and hard as metal, coming from hell. Nor could any speak or hear or eat or drink; as it blinded their eyes, it blinded their

mouths and their ears. And they starved, motionless in the blackness. But among the children of Israel there shone great lights, for they were already illumined by the Splendour of the Eternal.

To Pharaoh alone of all Egypt God had left a voice, to repent for all. This voice cried out in the darkness : " Moses ! Entreat thy God. Let the day return, and ye shall go ! "

Moses prayed, and the day returned. And many among the Egyptians said : " These Hebrews are mighty : a God is with them." What did the Israelites then whose heart was with Egypt ? They borrowed from them vessels of gold and silver, thinking within their hearts : " If we are to go, let us not go with empty hands ; the labour of six hundred and three thousand slaves during four hundred and thirty years is well worthy a small wage."

Korah, fearing lest he should be driven out with the others, wished to take with him all the riches of Egypt. Now Joseph, foreseeing a time of trial for his lord, had aforetime buried an immense treasure of gems and jade, of ivory, of dust of gold, near the river, beneath an obelisk : for in the days of the famine all the peoples of the earth had come to buy his corn. Korah knew the place where the treasure lay : he had forced the secret from the aged Serah, the last descendant of Joseph's last brother. So one night Korah's slaves, in hundreds, binding ropes about the obelisk, overthrew it, and, raising a slab of basalt found a key so heavy that thirty mules would not have sufficed to carry it. They opened the cave and entered by the light of a torch, and as they came out one by one, their backs bowed beneath the ingots which they piled into their chariots, upon the other bank of the river, in the light of a single torch, all alone, stood Moses.

A voice from God had guided him to the secret place

where Joseph was buried. For the Egyptians, knowing that his embalmed body would be a blessing upon their land, had desired that none should ever be able to rive him from his tomb. They had turned aside the river's channel, and, digging in the depths a deep fosse, had there laid to rest the sacred body in a coffin of porphyry. And for centuries the Nile, ever overflowing and returning within its banks, had rolled its sustenance-giving waves over the fructiferent remains of the dead Israelite. Now Joseph, when he lay dying, had said to his brothers : " It is known to me that a time shall come when the Egyptians in their ungratefulness shall put upon you a heavy bondage. But with strong hand and mighty arm the Lord shall bring you out of this land into the land of your fathers. Then carry up my bones from hence, and through you let a sepulchre be hewn for me in the one land where the dry bones shall live again, wherein the dead shall see God."

So Moses had come ; and, holding his torch's flame over the water, he called : " Joseph ! Joseph ! The hour is come ! God waits but for you ! We go ! Come with us ! "

The waters boiled in the depths, and, guided by an invisible hand, the dripping porphyry of the coffin came to rest upon the prophet's back. And while on the one bank of the river Korah bore away in the procession of his chariots Joseph's riches, upon the other Moses bore away his holiness.

Then God said to Moses : " This Joseph, whom thou carriest into the land of his fathers, did carry into the land of his fathers his father Jacob, to bury him ; yet it was but his duty as a son. But Joseph was not thy father to thee ; thou hast not any duty to him, and thou buriest him. Wherefore shall the Lord, who hath not any duty to His creatures, Himself bury thee." As it is written : *The Lord buried Moses in the valley.*

But yet once more Pharaoh broke his word. Scarce had he found the sun again ere he found again his sin. " Go with your women," he said to the Hebrews ; " I will keep your little ones." Moses answered : " Wretched sinner, dost thou think our God, instead of striking flocks, could not have struck thee and thine, and have blotted you from the world ? But He would that thou wouldst save thyself with us. Let us go, young and old, father and son, mothers and sucklings ; far from keeping us back, let thyself bring us offerings for the Lord." " Renounce the labour of six hundred thousand slaves," Pharaoh cried, " and give them gifts as well ? Get thee from me ; let me see thy face no more ! " And Moses said : " Thou shalt see it no more ; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel : ' If thou dost not repent, and let My people go, I will count six nights ; and on the seventh night about midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt : and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon the throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill.' "

Why the firstborn, Rabbi Tanhuma asks ? Because the Egyptians had drowned the new-born of Israel, and because Israel is the firstborn of the Lord.

It was in the month of Nisan, which is the first month. In this month Abraham had aforetime received the blessing of the Holy One, blessèd be He ; in this month Isaac had aforetime received the blessing of the Holy One, blessèd be He ; in this month Jacob had aforetime received the blessing of the Holy One, blessèd be He. And when the night that the Lord had said was near, the Israelites entreated Moses, saying : " How shall God save us, for our sins are without number ? " He answered : " Renew in your flesh the covenant of the Patriarchs." For, save only those of the tribe of Levi, none among them was circumcised. And when they had circumcised their flesh,

Moses said to them: "The Lord our God hath sent the murrain of beasts upon the beasts that are the idols of the Egyptians, and that were your idols; now therefore ye shall sacrifice a beast of your flocks, that was your idol and the Egyptians'. And ye shall take a lamb, according to your families, a lamb without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall mingle its blood with the blood of the circumcision; then ye shall take a bunch of hyssop [for, say our Rabbis, God wished to show through hyssop, which is the least of herbs, his greatness, which is the greatest of greatnesses]; ye shall dip it in this mingled blood; and ye shall strike it on the two side-posts of the door, in memory of Isaac and of Jacob, and on the lintel, in memory of Abraham. Then ye shall roast the whole lamb with fire: and thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste, praising the Lord, with the bitter herbs of bondage and the bread of freedom, without leaven. But let no man go out before the dawn, for in this night the Lord will smite all the firstborn of Egypt, and against all the gods of Egypt He will execute judgment. But He will see upon your houses the blood of the Covenant and the blood of the Passover, that shall deliver you from Egypt and from all the idols of the Egyptians; He will pass over you and will not destroy you. Wherefore shall this night be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast, ye and your children and your children's children, unto the Passover that the Messiah shall feast over the whole world."

When every one of the children of Israel had roasted the lamb with fire, God summoned the four winds that blow from Eden, and commanded them, saying: "Blow toward the west, toward the east, toward the south, toward the north." They blew; and the fragrance of the

Passover was spread over all the earth. Then all the kings of all the earth asked : " What is this fragrance ? " And the angels of heaven answered : " It is Israel, who prepareth the salvation of the world."

And while this passed, many of the righteous among the firstborn of the Egyptians had fled to the children of Israel ; and the children of Israel had welcomed them ; for it is written : *This is the gateway of the Lord, the Righteous shall enter in*—not only the righteous in Israel, but all that are righteous in the eyes of the Eternal.

And many of the wicked among the firstborn of the Egyptians had fled to the temples of their idols. But there they were in no wise saved, for the will of God is fulfilled.

And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord of hosts, the unbeheld Sabaoth, came down upon Egypt with nine thousand myriads of destroying angels, of whom some were of invisible iron and others of fire invisible. But when the angels of iron and of fire would have hurled upon the Egyptians their fire and their iron, God stayed them, saying : " Justice is the Lord's alone."

Then was a great cry in Egypt ; for there was no house where there was not one dead. Dead were the firstborn of their sons, dead the firstborn of their daughters ; dead the firstborn of their princes, dead the firstborn of their vassals ; the firstborn of the rich and of the poor, even to the firstborn of the captives in the dungeons, who had said : " We would rather remain captives than see Israel delivered " ; and even to those of the slaves who, grinding the corn between the millstones, had said : " We would rather remain slaves than see Israel set free." Dead even the firstborn of the dead, for the dogs nosed them out in their tombs, to make them die a second death. And over all the earth all the idols of all the nations died also : those of stone dissolved into dust, those of wood into corruption, and those of metal into watery stench.

That night Pharaoh in his palace delayed not for his slaves to awake him ; he was wakened by the universal cry. And when he had risen, alone and without help in the night, his foot stumbled ; his hand felt about in the dark : upon the dais of porphyry there lay his son, stricken dead.

Then tumult went all about the palace, and entered by the hundred gates, and filled the hundred courts and the sonorous halls and resounding walls. It was all the mothers, all the fathers, all the people gathered in anguish and trembling, crying out to their king : " Let them go, or we be all dead men ! " But he answered them not : for, say our Sages, when the sinner has been nine times tried, and nine times has refused to repent, God refuses him the desire to repent.

And a forest of arms rose up, a forest of clenched hands stretched out toward him ; whips and rods, spears and swords circled with threatening death the silent face of Pharaoh. Of a sudden the uplifted arms, the clenched fists, the rods and whips, the swords and spears circling that silent face were stilled : a distant scraping was heard ; beneath a green aura the scraping drew nearer in the silence of the night. Along the river and through the gardens, by the sphinxes and the pylons, the scraping luminosity drew nearer : below the aura a mask with painted eyes ; below the mask, swathings, and below the swathings, two motionless feet, that walked.

All knew, come from its pyramid, Bithiah's mummy : Bithiah, mother of Pharaoh in the flesh, mother of Moses in the spirit. A hand came forth from the swathing. It took Pharaoh's hand, and the dead mother led away her living son into the silence of the night.

Together they went toward a light ; together they went toward singing. When they were come to a door whose side-posts and lintel were stained with blood, dead Bithiah

knocked : the door opened. Living Pharaoh saw Hebrews, who were singing standing all about a smoking meat, their loins girded, their shoes upon their feet, and their staffs in their hands. Then he cried out : " Moses ! " A voice answered : " Thou shalt see me no more." Again he cried out : " I have sinned, Moses, I have sinned. I know Him now, the God whom I knew not. I bring thee all my crowns for Him. Go in peace, and bless me also ! " And behind him all the mothers, all the fathers, all the people cried out : " We offer up all our riches unto the Lord God : go in peace, and bless us also." But the voice said again : " Ye shall see me no more."

Then the breath of dead Bithiah murmured : " Moses, my son, for the sake of her who saved thee, wilt thou not save the firstborn of my flesh ? thou who art the firstborn of my spirit ? " And Moses answered : " Mother who didst save me, for thy sake I would have sought to save all Egypt ; why wast thou not there, to save it with me ! " And, showing his face to Pharaoh : " Is it thy will to say after me in a loud voice the words I shall say to thee ? " " It is my will." " Then repeat : ' Children of Israel, be free : ye were my slaves, now ye are the servants of the Lord.' " Pharaoh said it ; all those who were there heard his voice. " Say it a second time," said Moses. A second time he repeated it : and all Egypt heard his voice. " A third time say it." And a third time he said : " Children of Israel, be free ; ye were my slaves, now ye are the servants of the Lord." And the whole world heard his voice.

Then Bithiah returned to her shadows, and, as if a thousand suns together had on a sudden shone forth, day appeared ; for, say our Rabbis, the children of Israel were not to flee in the night, like slaves, but to go forth free men, in the full light of day.

Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, the young and the old, they went forth, laden with the gifts of Egypt.

Korah, Abiram, Dathan, and many Israelities whose heart was with Egypt remained with the Egyptians ; but many Egyptians whose heart was with Israel followed the Israelites.

It was the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan. Our Doctors say that in the Appointed Time, when the children of Israel shall have passed through all their captivities, on this same day of this same month the Prophet of the Wilderness shall return from the Wilderness, the Prophet of Rome shall return from Rome, and the Messiah, delivering the world, shall bring peace between them, and shall lead them, each leading his flock, to the Justice of Zion and to the Peace of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER VIII

"AND THE WATERS WERE DIVIDED"

The children of Israel journeyed, and the Lord went before them, as it is written, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. They journeyed toward Succoth by the eastern road that leads into the desert.

Why, asks Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, did they not take the Gath road, that goes toward the north? They would have reached the Promised Land in eleven days, instead of wandering forty years in the wilderness. It is like that king who, having a son, wished to give him his inheritance. He thought to himself: "My son is young: he hardly knows how to read and write. If I give him all my possessions now, will he be able to keep them? I will wait until he has grown in strength and wisdom." In the same way God thought: "The children of Israel are verily still children: first let Me teach them to understand and practise My Law. When they have grown to manhood in My precepts and My commandments, then will I give them the Promised Land."

Now as soon as they were gone forth, Pharaoh regretted their going. Rabbi Simeon ben Levi says it is like that man who had a garden, and sold it to his neighbour, not knowing what his garden contained. "How much did you sell it for?" he was asked. "A hundred ribous." "But in your garden there were vines worth ten thousand ribous, olive-trees worth ten thousand, pomegranates worth ten thousand, trees of spice worth ten thousand." Then the man regretted what he had done. Likewise Pharaoh. When the children of Israel were fled, the chief men of the Egyptians

came to him and said : " Look what thou hast lost ! Didst thou not know how many artisans there were in Israel, and how many rich men, and how many wise ones ? " Then Pharaoh regretted what he had done.

Instantly he made ready his army. He himself, in his haste, harnessed his own chariot. All the chief men of the Egyptians did like him. Instead of two horses, he harnessed three. All the warriors of the Egyptians did like him ; and he went so swiftly that in one day he covered the ground the children of Israel had journeyed over in three. And against each of them he brought three hundred warriors, and he took with him all his treasure so that he might enrol, if it were necessary, all the peoples of the earth. Samael, the angel of death, went before him with his myriads, and Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and all the Israelites of the Court of Egypt followed him, thinking : " If Pharaoh triumph, we will stay with Pharaoh : if he be vanquished by God, we will go with God."

Moses, unwilling to flee before the might of man, had brought Israel from Etham to before Pi-hahiroth, over against Baal-Zephon, by the shores of the sea: there, hewn from the rock, was the one idol in the universe that the Lord, to give Pharaoh confidence and so better to ensure his ruin, had allowed to remain standing. All the beasts of the desert came out against the children of Israel, and Pharaoh, learning this, rejoiced, saying : " Baal-Zephon protects me : he will give me victory."

When they saw the sea before them, the beasts of the desert on the right and on the left, and behind them all Egypt in arms, the children of Israel were stricken with terror, and cried out to Moses : " What hast thou done ? Thine enemies will smite *us* because of *thy* plagues. It had been better to serve the Egyptians than to die here." And some among the wailing women and children gathered stones to stone him. But he, taking no care for that,

answered them: "Think ye that God sent to the Egyptians the rivers of blood, the frogs, the lice, the flies, the murrain of beasts, the boils and blains, the hail, the locusts, the darkness, and the death of the firstborn, to bring death upon us now? His miracles of yesterday promise His miracles of to-morrow; for armies, wild beasts, and seas are as naught before Him. Believe in His power; it shall save you."

And, turning toward the Lord, he prayed. But God said unto him: "My children are in sore distress, and thou prayest? There is a time for prayer and a time for action. In the beginning of the world, for Adam's sake, I gathered the waters into one place, and the dry land into one place: now for My people's sake the waters must be divided and the dry land must appear in the midst of the waters."

But Satan, wholly unwilling that Israel should be saved, appeared before the Lord, and said: "Only yesterday these children of Israel adored idols, and to-day for their sake Thou wouldst divide the waters?" What then did God? inquire our Sages. He did, replies Rabbi Hama bar Hanina, like that shepherd who wished to lead his sheep across the ford of a river. A wolf appeared, barring the passage. Then the shepherd took a he-goat, the strongest of the flock, and threw him to the wolf, thinking: "While the wolf is struggling with the goat I will get my sheep safely across: when they are safe, I will return and wrest the goat from him." In the same way God, desiring to save the children of Israel from Satan, said to him: "What is the value of a few slaves' souls to thee? Dost thou know My servant Job? His soul, by itself, is worth all theirs. Thou mayest tempt it; I abandon it to thee." He thought: "While Satan is with Job, I will save the children of Israel; and when they are saved, I will retrieve Job from Satan."

Now this was that same Job, who, aforetime, had kept

silence before Pharaoh, instead of speaking with Jethro and against Balaam, when he had counselled that Moses and the firstborn of Israel should be drowned in the Nile. Not having expiated his forgotten sin, he deserved chastisement ; but having retired into the land of Uz, between the Two Rivers, in the city of his birth, he had grown rich in sons and in daughters, in oxen and in camels, in justice and in charity. Long had Satan lain in wait for this soul, precious amongst all others. When God had offered it to him, instantly he turned from the children of Israel and fell upon Job, to torture him in heart, in spirit, and in flesh.

Then the Lord said to Moses : " Stretch out thine hand over the sea : it will divide ; and ye shall pass over." " But how can such a thing be possible ? " asked the Prophet, " for didst Thou not, in the beginning of the world, say unto the earth : ' Here is thy place, here thou shalt remain,' and to the sea, ' Here is thy place, thou shalt not depart hence ' ? " " Is this then the strength of thy faith, Moses ? " replied God. " Thou criest unto My children, ' Believe in Him,' and thyself dost not believe. Knowest thou whether, in the beginning of the world, I did not make a pact with the sea, to let you pass over to-day ? Dost think that the creation I created is finished, and that man cannot change anything in it, if I consent ? One of My prophets will stay the sun, whom I have commanded to journey ; another will stay the rain, which I have commanded to fall ; another will stay death, whom I have commanded to slay ; and the last will create a new world, with a new heaven. Command the sea then to divide. If thou willest it, it shall divide, and ye shall pass over."

Moses said to the sea : " Divide ! " But the sea cried out : " I was born before thee. Who art thou, man born of woman, that I should obey thee ? " At this reply Moses

complained to God, who said : " What doeth the master when his servant rebelleth ? He striketh him. Strike then the sea with thy rod : it shall open, and ye shall pass over." He struck ; the sea still resisted. Then, at the right of the Prophet's right arm and the Prophet's will, the Lord stretched out His right arm and His will. Instantly a wind blew from the east ; the wind that chastiseth the nations ; the wind that blew the Deluge, that blew upon Babel, upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, upon Jerusalem and upon Rome ; the wind that, in the day of Gog and Magog, shall blow upon the whole earth. And all night, like the invisible shear of an invisible plough, this wind, every blowing, furrowed in the midst of the waters a visible furrow. On each side the waves stood up like walls. To those on the left the archangel Gabriel cried : " Stand upright for Israel, who shall bear on his left arm the holy phylactery of God's Torah." And to those on the right he cried : " Stand upright for Israel, who shall receive his holy Torah from the holy right hand of God."

On the shore the twelve tribes of Israel were disputing : each had claimed the glory of preceding all the others ; and the sons of Judah, in their anger at seeing themselves distanced, threw stones at the sons of Benjamin, whose faith in God had made them run into the waves before they had divided. This holy emulation, say our Doctors, was later rewarded ; for it was on the borders of Benjamin and Judah, in Solomon's Temple, that the Presence of the Lord descended.

Now while the tribes were thus disputing in their zeal, twelve pathways, separated by twelve walls of motionless crystal, suddenly opened in the furrow that cleft the sea. And the twelve tribes marched side by side on these twelve paths. And Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, summoned by the mouth of the Lord from the cave of Machpelah, where

rested their bones, looked with their dead eyes upon His accomplished promise : translucent giants, their feet on the sand, their foreheads reaching to the heavens, they stretched out across the sea their six vast arms, whose hands, already hovering upon the further side, waited there to bless Israel's arrival.

Meanwhile, perplexed by the miracle, the Israelites whose heart was with Egypt, and whose curiosity, stronger than their fear, had drawn them beyond the forefront of the Egyptians, debated : " There has been no battle : is Pharaoh vanquished ? " asked some. " There has been no battle : is Pharaoh the victor ? " asked the others. " Since the sea is divided, let us go," proposed Dathan. " But suppose it close again, when we are in it," Abiram objected. " Try it, in any case," Korah ordered, surrounded by his treasure. And they advanced cautiously.

Now, in order to draw on after them the Egyptians, God let save the Israelites whose heart was with Egypt.

When they saw the Israelites enter into the sea, Pharaoh and his army, stupefied, at first thought them smitten with madness ; but when they preceived that their slaves were escaping, and that the road of their flight remained open, they took up the pursuit furiously. And the dried sand of the depths between the twelve walls of crystal bristled with chariots and horses, with helmets and bucklers, with javelins and pikes : and already Moses, and with him God, was about to withdraw his right arm, and let the waves engulf them, when Mizraim, the guardian angel of Egypt, rose up before the Lord and said : " King of the World, Thou art a God of Justice. Is it just that Egypt should die? Thy people suffered there : did they not also prosper ? They served there : have they not repaid themselves for their service ? When they came they were seventy, dying of hunger : they depart six hundred and three thousand, laden with treasure. And Thou wouldst have the death of

those who let them come and let them go?" The Lord replied: "Ten times I pardoned Pharaoh; ten times he denied Me: ten times he promised My people freedom; ten times he disowned his promise; now he hastens after them to make them slaves once more!"

"Lord," replied the Angel, "it is just that Thy people should be free. But where is the creature that could exist before Thee, if Thou didst judge in the rigour of Thy Justice? Remember Thy Mercy, King of the World; for the eleventh time, pardon Egypt."

And for the eleventh time God was about to pardon, when Michael, the guardian archangel of Israel, cried: "Look what they have done to Thy sons!" With his two flaming hands he lifted up a wall wherein, under the hardened lime, imprisoned in the brick, all the angels saw the children of the Israelites, their agony still crying aloud. And all the angels cried: "Behold, behold!" Then God said: "Let My Justice reign."

The right arm of Moses, that was holding back the flood, fell, and with it the right arm of the Lord. The twelve walls of crystal fled away in blinding flashes of sunlight, and the sea covered up Egypt. One only escaped—Pharaoh; he became King of Nineveh, he became King of Babylon; he was called Antiochus, he was called Titus, he was called Justinian; until the end of the world he will bear a thousand names, for, like Israel, Israel's persecutor is eternal.

But while all this passed, Job, tortured by Satan, groaned out to God in the bitterness of his heart: "Seemeth it good to Thee to overwhelm me? Why wouldst Thou destroy in me the work of Thy hands? What have I done? What is my crime? Have I dispoiled the widow and the orphan, or refused the labourer his hire, or shut my door against the poor, or my mouth against Truth? Dost Thou then see with

the eyes of man, Thou who permittest the suffering of the just ? "

He did not remember his past sin ; he did not know, say our Rabbis, that his atonement, by turning Satan aside from Israel, served, in the harmony of the world, to save Israel ; and while he cursed his Maker, he did not hear the hymn of thanksgiving resound on the miraculous shore.

The Lord is my strength, and song, and He is become my salvation : He is my God, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the Gods ? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ?

Now, when this hymn of deliverance rose from earth to heaven, the angels wished to mingle their voices in it, but God said to them : " What : My children the Egyptians are dying in the sea, and ye would sing ? " Then the angels were silent. But Israel in joy completed the song :

Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed : Thou guidedst them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation, to the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

And in the exaltation of this hymn the whole posterity of Abraham were inhabited by the breath of the Lord. For Jacob, delivered from exile, had not sung ; Isaac, delivered from the knife, had not sung. Abraham, delivered from the furnace, had not sung. But on that day of the divided waters not only sang Moses, the prophet, and Miriam, the prophetess, but there sang every man in Israel, and every woman, and the old and the new-born. And even, in its mother's womb, the unborn child sang, for in that hour it saw more clearly the glory of the Lord than did Ezekiel, the prophet, in the hour of his exaltation.

CHAPTER IX

THE WAY OF MIRACLES

Next day, after the miraculous song which for a moment had made of Israel the very voice of God, the waves of the sea, in their rise and fall on the shore, carried to and fro in their surge the Egyptians' corpses. The children of Israel on the shore pointed out to each other their enemies, recognising them : " *He* struck me on the back," cried one, " And *he* on the head," cried another. And they laughed in their joy.

And with the corpses, the waves brought in weapons and treasure : swords, quivers, vessels, collars, emeralds, rubies. The earth said to the water : " Keep them, they are yours." To the earth, the water said : " They belong to you, take them back." What did Abiram then ? He said to the Israelites : " Since the earth does not wish them, and the sea refuses them, what if we accept them ? "

They took the arrows and the javelins, the sardonyx and the sapphire ; they girded on the weapons and hid away the jewels. And when Moses had the hour of departure proclaimed, they no longer desired to depart : squatting on the shore, they searched for new spoil. For, say our Teachers, what is man, that God should inhabit him ? Soon he becomes man again, and swiftly God leaves him.

Moses said to them : " Do ye suppose the waters will go on casting up pearls for you till the end of the world ? " But Abiram replied : " The Lord brought us forth out of Egypt for five things : to avenge us upon the Egyptians,

to deliver up to us their treasure, to show us the way by a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire, to open for us the sea, and to hear our song. We are avenged upon the Egyptians, we have their treasure, God has divided the sea, He has led us, He has heard us. What remains to do? Since there are no more Egyptians, let us return into Egypt?" "Egypt," replied Moses, "ye will never see again: the sea opened for your departure, it is closed against your return. God has delivered you to make of you His people: ye will be His people at the foot of the mount." And they went forth.

First they crossed the wilderness of Shur, which is infested by serpents so venomous that when they glide across a bird's shadow the bird dies. But the children of Israel walked upon the serpents and perished not. Moses said to them: "If ye listen to the word of the Lord, ye will live."

Then they came to Marah, where the waters are bitter. Some murmured: "What shall we drink?" Moses prayed; and when he had prayed, he threw into the bitter waters a branch of bitter wood; and the waters were made sweet. For, say our Sages, God is in no wise like man, who must have sweetness to sweeten bitterness: out of bitterness He maketh sweetness.

Then they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water and three score and ten palm-trees. But the wells gave little water and the palms little shade. Many murmured: "What shall we drink?" And behold the twelve wells, that were scarce sufficient to water the three score and ten palm-trees, sufficed to water six hundred and three thousand children of Israel.

Then they came to Rephidim, where there was no water. All murmured: "Hast thou brought us up out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst here?" Moses said to them: "When ye complain against me ye complain against God. Perceive ye not that He is trying

you, as He tried the Egyptians? Will ye succumb in the trial, or will ye prove yourselves a people worthy of the Lord?" And he prayed.

The Lord said to him: "Take thy rod, strike a rock, and water will gush out." "Is this possible?" asked the prophet. "Has not this rod brought ten plagues upon Egypt? How can it bring salvation upon Israel? "Am I a man," replied God, "or am I God? Man wounds with his knife and heals with balm, but I, I kill and revive with the same hand, and when This hand wounds, even the wound is a healing." Then Moses said to the children of Israel: "God has heard your complaining: this time once again He forgiveth you. I shall strike a rock: water will gush out." "He has discovered a spring, as the shepherds do," exclaimed Dathan, "and he wants us to believe in a fresh miracle." "Follow me," replied Moses, "ye shall witness it. I will strike the rock ye choose." They followed him, and said to him, "Strike this rock!" He struck, and the water gushed out. But Dathan still jeered: "Must we have a miracle every day? In Egypt we had a river that flowed ceaselessly: we could quench our thirst without nearly dying of it. How long will ye follow this man, who leads you to death, so that ye may owe your lives to him?"

Now Miriam, since the day when she had confided Moses' cradle to the waters of the river, had believed in the miracle of the waters. And it was for this that God for her sake now worked another miracle. On the second day of the Creation, he had created a predestined spring, the same whereat Abraham had watered his flocks after disputing it with the King of the Philistines, the same concerning which the Patriarch had prophesied. "The three score and ten generations of Israel shall water here." Miriam touched a sieve-like rock in the valley; that rock contained that spring, and twelve rivers gushed forth from it. Along the rivers trees were reflected, grasses and flowers gave

forth fragrance. And for forty years, everywhere where the children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness, the twelve rivers that had gushed forth from Miriam's spring followed them: when they stopped, the rivers stopped ; when they went forward, the rivers went with them. And from that day the children of Israel knew no thirst.

And before this they had ceased from all hunger. For in the wilderness of Sin, when, after sixty and one meals, they perceived that their provision which they had brought from Egypt was exhausted, they cried out against the Prophet : " In Egypt our flesh-pots were filled. Why have we come here to seek out hunger ? Was there not room enough there for our graves ? Why did we not die there in the night of darkness, stricken down by one blow, like the Egyptians, rather than suffer this long death, that is worse than death ? " Moses replied to them : " In Egypt ye were fed like yoked beasts of burden, that are driven with whips : ye ate the bread of bond-slaves. Will ye not accept suffering, for the bread of liberty ? " Then all gathered stones to stone him.

They were already flying round his head, and the blood flowed from him, when Aaron and Miriam, protecting him with their own bodies, led him by force into his tent. And he groaned to the Lord : " Behold, O Lord, what they do to Thy prophet. Their distress is too great for their spirit. When I try to follow Thy word, and lead them to Thee, it is to murder that I lead them." God replied to him : " They act according to what they are. I shall act according to what *I* am. I will rain upon them the bread of heaven : but let them not take more than enough for one day ; let them not store up any for the morrow, and let them take none on the seventh day ; for in six days I created heaven and earth, and the seventh day, whereon I rested, My people, Israel, shall rest also." When Moses reappeared

before the children of Israel his countenance smiled upon them. Seeing his smile, they fell on their knees. The Prophet reported to them the Lord's word. They believed and waited.

On the next day, as it is written, in the morning the dew lay round about the camp, and when the dew was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small thing, as small as the hoar-frost on the ground. The children of Israel asked : " What is it ? " For they wist not what it was. Moses replied : " This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat : gather it, but let no man store it up for the morrow."

Now this manna contained within itself all the savours in the world, and, according to Rabbi Abba, as soon as a man wished for any dish, it took on its flavour : one after the other it became meat or bread, oil or honey in the mouth. To gather it up was an easy task, even to the most slothful, for it fell into the hands ; and so great was its abundance that Joshua, the son of Nun, received in one morning enough to feed the whole assembly. It lay on the ground higher than the waters of the flood, and the peoples of the east and of the west beheld God feeding His people with His heavenly bread. And thus on the Day of Judgment the wicked shall behold the righteous seated at the table of the Lord, for manna is milled in the third heaven, in the mills of the angels, and the saints will feed upon it in Eternity. Then they will ask God to give His blessing upon their delights ; and God will say to the Patriarchs : " Say the blessing for Me." And the Patriarchs will say to Moses : " Say it for us ; thou alone art worthy." And Moses will say it.

Thus each of the children of Israel gathered manna, some more and some less ; but when they had returned to their tents and measured it, they found that each had

sufficient for himself, and no more. Abiram and Dathan, fearing for the morrow, kept some over. But the worms bred in it, and changed it to corruption. Moses said to them : " Will ye for ever doubt the Lord ? "

And on the eve of the Sabbath each one's share was doubled, and Moses commanded the children of Israel : " To-morrow ye shall not go out, for in six days the Lord our God created heaven and earth, and the seventh day, whereon He rested, shall be the day of rest of His people Israel." That day the manna did not fall, for the mills of the angels rested to sanctify the Lord, and the double portion of the day remained pure. But Abiram and Dathan, and others with them, went forth, none the less, despite the Sabbath, desiring to gather a larger provision ; and when they saw that no manna had fallen on that day they began to fear that it would fall no more. But Moses said to them : " O ye sinners ! God commandeth that ye rest, and ye obey Him not. How, then, will ye accomplish His Law ? Keep the Sabbath, and each day will bring forth food ; keep the Sabbath, and God will give you the Promised Land and the world to come." Then they listened to him, but if all the children of Israel had, from the first moment, respected the Sabbath, no nation on earth would have vanquished Israel.

Thus, our Doctors comment, the Lord for forty years did for the children of Israel in the desert what Abraham at Mamre had done for the three angels of the Lord. Abraham had offered the angels water—God opened for the Israelites Miriam's well ; Abraham had offered the angels bread—God opened for his children his reservoirs of manna ; Abraham had offered to the angels the shade of his trees—God put forth over the children of Israel the shadow of His Splendour ; Abraham had offered to lead the angels back—God led the children of Israel by his miraculous pillar.

For, our Sages add, the Lord is in no wise like a king of flesh and blood, who says to his servant : " Serve me, that I may eat ; serve me, that I may drink ; dress me ; bear before me a torch." It was God, the Master, who, when He had chosen Israel for His servant, gave to him meat and drink, and clad him in His splendour, and illumined him with His light.

But Israel became accustomed to all these benefactions ; what had at first seemed incredible now seemed but natural, and, forgetting God, who had bestowed upon them His miracles, they were, say our Rabbis, like the child perched on his father's shoulder, to whom his father gives all sorts of playthings, but who asks each newcomer : " Where is my father ? " Then what does the father ? He is annoyed, and throws down the child, and then the dog runs up and the child is bitten. The dog who bit Israel was Amalek.

The son of Eliphaz, the eldest son of Jacob's enemy brother Esau, he had inherited his ancestor's hatred, and sought the extermination of Israel that his ancestor's word had enjoined upon his posterity. In his hatred he sent envoys to all the nations of the earth, saying : " Do not despise these fugitives, who are come out from Egypt to free themselves from slavery. Attack them in the desert, while they are still destitute ; do not wait until they are strengthened, and, swollen with vanity by the capture of some town or territory, themselves declare war upon you." But, remembering God's wonders, and fearing the fate of the Egyptians, the nations dared not join him ; and Amalek, Israel's brother, coming upon them from the land of Seir, he and his host, alone, without provocation rose against Israel.

At first, camped opposite the children of Israel, he drew them to him by soft words. "Are we not brothers?" he said.

"Come, let us converse together; accept the gifts that I give you." And those whom he had seduced he slew, he mutilated them, and, hurling towards heaven their dismembered limbs, that bore upon them the seal of the Covenant, he cried: "Behold your covenant with the Eternal."

Whom could Moses choose from among the descendants of Jacob to fight against this evil brother? For had not Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, Judah, Naphtali, Dan, and Gad, Asher, Issachar, and Zebulun, all sold their brother Joseph? For that reason Moses chose Joshua, the son of Nun, descended from Joseph, who, when he was sold by his brothers, pardoned them; for only the prince in whose veins flowed truly brotherly blood was pure enough to chastise the sin against brotherhood.

So Moses told Joshua all that he must do. Then he said to the Israelites: "Ye have but to fight against men, and God is with you. He who opened for you a path through the waters, and a path through thirst and hunger, He will not abandon you now." And he filled them with such brave courage that they themselves clamoured for battle.

Then he went up to the top of the hill with Aaron his brother, and Hur the husband of Miriam his sister, and he beseeched the Lord: "King of the World," he cried, "it is by my hands, but by Thy power, that Thou hast delivered Thy people; it was by my hand, but by Thy power, that Thou didst divide the waters, that Thou didst vanquish our hunger and thirst; may it be Thy power to-day that shall bring victory; for my hand, without Thy power, is naught." And from the top of the hill he looked upon the mêlée.

And it came to pass that when Moses held up his hands Israel prevailed, and when he let fall his hands Amalek prevailed. But Moses could not hold up his hands all the time, for sometimes doubt weakened him. Seeing this, Hur

and Aaron stayed up his two hands until the going down of the sun and the discomfiture of Amalek.

Why, our Rabbis inquire, was this miracle performed? Was it Moses' raised hands that brought victory? In no wise; but he strove with prayer, while the Israelites fought with arms, and his prayer strengthened their arms.

The slaughter of the Amalekites was so great that the dead could not be numbered; and Israel suffered no loss. No other victory had such consequences; for, besides the terror with which it filled the nations, it put courage into the hearts of the children of Israel. No longer, as in the days of the divided waters, or of the welling rock, or of the sustaining manna, was it God alone or God with His Prophet who had decided their fate; they themselves, by fighting, had made proof of their faith and seen that, for faith, nothing is impossible. Wherefore Moses, wishing to perpetuate the glory of this miracle, built an altar of stone, which God called "My Miracle"; for the greatest of God's miracles is Israel's faith.

When Jethro, with Zipporah his daughter, Moses' wife, and the two sons she had borne him, heard of these marvels, he came from Midian into the wilderness of Sinai to seek the Prophet in the place where the Lord had appeared to him in the burning bush. When he had come near to the camp, he sent a message to the Prophet of the Israelites, saying: "When I, with Balaam and Job, counselled Pharaoh in Egypt in the days before thou wast born, I had already felt that the God of Israel is a great God. Since then I have visited all the idols of all the temples of the earth, and seen that every idol is vanity; and before thy coming to Midian I had seen that the idol of Midian, that I served, was also vanity. Now I know that only the God of Israel is God, maker of heaven and earth. Receive me, then, amongst His people; if thou wilt not do it for me, do

it for Zipporah thy wife, whom I bring back to thee ; if thou wilt not do it for her, do it for thy sons, whom I bring back to thee."

Moses pondered in his heart : " Ought I to receive them ? While the children of Israel baked bricks and covered over with lime their sacrificed children under the whip of slavery, *they* were at ease in Midian ; while the children of Israel groaned with hunger and thirsted in the wilderness, they in Midian were rich and care-free. Now the Lord is about to give the children of Israel His Law, the recompense of their sufferings ; and *they*, who have suffered nothing for His Law, shall they also have part in it?" But God said to him : " Am I, then, only the God of those who are near Me. Every heart that turns toward Me is with Me.

At once Moses rose up, and, followed by the seventy elders, by Aaron and by Aaron's four sons, he went toward the gates of the camp to meet Jethro. And when Jethro the proselyte entered into the camp, behold at full noon manna began to fall for his only sake : and it fell so abundantly that he could have fed with it all the nations of the earth. Then Moses gave him the kiss of peace, for the Name of the Lord is Peace. And he made for him a feast, and himself served him at it.

And now, delivered from the fear of hunger and thirst, freed from the terror of warring men, exalted by the faith of the converted heathens, the children of Israel could turn their whole souls toward the promise of the Law. Then it was that Job, tortured by Satan on his dunghill, unknowing in his blasphemy that his anguish was the ransom of their salvation, was of a sudden restored by the Lord to his past happiness, and he cried out in his joy : " Blessèd be the Lord ! "

CHAPTER X

THE VOICE ON THE MOUNTAIN

When God was about to give Israel the Law of Moses, which is called the Torah, all the mountains appeared before Him, and each cried : " King of the World, King of the World, let Thy Splendour fall upon me, let Thy Torah be given from me ! " " Choose me," said Hermon ; am I not the highest of mountains ? My brow emerged from the Deluge, as thy Law will emerge from sin." " Choose me," said Carmel, " am I not the loveliest of gardens ? Plant upon me the garden of Thy Law, which will make the soul into a garden lovelier than Eden." " Choose me, choose me," said Lebanon, " am I not the most beautiful of hymns, in the voice of my cedars which hymn Thy grandeur. Hymn upon me the hymn of Thy Law, which will make man as a hymn toward Thee."

But God said to Sinai : " On thee I will set My Splendour ; from thee I will give My Torah ; for thou art alone in the desert, as Israel My people is alone in the desert of the peoples, and as I, I the Lord God, am alone in the desert of the universe."

Eternal is the Torah, say our Rabbis ; for it existed before the world, and for it the world was, and when He created the world, the Lord consulted it.

Mighty is the Torah, say our Doctors ; for God had decreed : " Let the heaven be My place, and the earth the place of mankind." But through the Torah, which united

heaven and earth, heaven descended upon earth, and earth arose into heaven.

Wise is the Torah, say our Sages : for if all the water of all the seas were changed into ink, and all the reeds of all the rivers into pens, and if the whole extent of the whole firmament were changed into parchment, and all the fingers of all the living into fingers of scribes, there would not be enough ink, nor enough parchment, nor enough pens, nor enough scribes to write the whole wisdom of the Torah.

Great is the Torah, greater than truth, for it contains truth ; greater than justice, for it contains justice ; greater than love, and greater than mercy, for the Torah contains mercy and the Torah contains love.

But, our Rabbis ask, if God possessed such a treasure, and if He wished to give it to mortals, why did He not give it to the first man in the first days ? The first man had received from the Lord a single commandment : " Thou shalt not eat of the fruit of this tree." Yet Adam ate of the fruit ; how, then, could he have received the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah ?

Why did not God give it to the generation of Noah ? Noah had received from the Eternal seven commandments, and his descendants built Babel. How, then, could they have received the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah ?

Why did He not give it to the generations of the Patriarchs ? The Patriarchs had received from the Eternal nine commandments, and their descendants merited the slavery of Egypt. How, then, could they have received the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah ?

But the generation of Moses had been purified by the sufferings of bondage, and by hunger and thirst, and by the witness of miracles ; and now peace reigned amongst the children of Israel, and, living in peace, they could receive

the Torah of Moses, which is the Peace of the Lord. And each day, since the departure from Egypt, the Prophet had asked the Lord: "When wilt Thou give us the Torah?" But the Lord still delayed.

He waited until the month of Sivan, which is the third among the months. Like a king of flesh and blood, who, before he leads his betrothed beneath the nuptial canopy, firsts loads her with gifts, He first wanted to give the children of Israel the well and the manna, before marrying, through the Torah, the community of Israel.

He waited until the month of Sivan, which is the third among the months, because the number three rejoices the Lord. It was the third son of Adam, Seth, who was the ancestor of mankind; it was the third son of Noah, Shem, who was the ancestor of Israel; it was the three Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who, by their virtue, merited the glory of the chosen people; it was in the third tribe, that of Levi, that Moses was born, who was the third child of his mother; and for three months his existence was concealed, before he was put into the cradle which saved him upon the river; and for three months the Lord concealed the Torah, which, upon the mountain, should save mankind.

When the month of Sivan had come, God said to Moses: "The soul of My Torah is without fault; is the body of My people without fault? There are amongst them the deaf and the dumb, the blind and the halt. Shall I give My Torah to him who cannot see it nor hear it, who can neither sing nor dance for it?" What, then, did God? He restored their voices to the dumb, and their hearing to the deaf; he restored their eyes to the blind, and to the halt their legs. And thus it shall be in the world to come, when the deaf shall hear, when the blind shall see, when the halt and the dumb shall dance and sing before the Lord.

Now, sound in flesh as in spirit, they could receive the

Torah. But would they desire to welcome it? The Torah is a crown, but a crown is a burden; the Torah is a necklace, but a necklace is a chain. God had offered it to all the peoples of the earth, so that none could say: "If we had known it, we would have practised it": and he gave it not in a land shut in by frontiers, but in the midst of the wilderness, so that any who desired it might take it, as it is written: *The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran; from His right hand went a fiery law for them.*

He went first to the children of Esau and asked them: "Do ye desire My Torah?" They replied: "What does it command?" "Thou shalt not kill." "Then we should have to renounce the blessing of Esau, our father, who blessed us, saying, 'Thou shalt live by the sword.' We do not want Thy Torah." He went next to the children of Ammon and Moab, and asked them: "Do ye desire My Torah?" They replied: "What does it command?" "Thou shalt not commit fornication." "We were born from fornication," they replied, "We do not want Thy Torah." Then He went to the children of Ishmael, and asked them: "Do ye desire My Torah?" They replied: "What does it command?" "Thou shalt not steal." "How then should we find meat and drink?" they replied, "We do not want Thy Torah." And then He went to all the other people, who all replied to Him: "We have our law; give Thy Torah to Israel, for Israel is free and has no law." Then the Lord called Moses to the mountain; and Moses went up toward God, and God commanded him: "Ask the children of Israel if they desire My Torah."

Moses addressed himself first of all to the women. Why the women? Because, Rabbi Tahlipha says, the Prophet thought in his heart: "If God had instructed Eve, would

Adam have sinned ? " For he knew that everything depends on woman, who at her pleasure brings salvation or ruin upon the world.

So, having assured himself of the women's acquiescence, he assembled the whole people, men and women, the old and the young, and he said : " Hard is the beginning of all things, and harder than all is the beginning of obedience ; but ye have begun to obey, and he who at first obeyeth in pain soon obeyeth in joy ; and to obey God is the greatest of joys. Your eyes have seen what miracles He did for you, delivering you from Egypt, from thirst and from hunger. And yet ye had not then received His Torah. What miracles will He not do when ye have received it, listened to it, followed it ? Then He will bear you on the wings of the eagle, and to the end of time He will watch over you like the swallow over her young. But when the Torah belongeth to you, you will belong to the Torah ; all the benedictions which are in it will be yours, if ye follow it ; if ye abandon it, all the maledictions that are in it will fall upon you. And now, answer God ; do ye desire His Torah ? " And the children of Israel said : " We desire it ; what it commands, that will we accomplish."

" But," Moses then asked them, " what will be the sureties of your promise before the Lord ? " " Let the Elders be our sureties," they said. " Your Elders will die, how can they be your sureties ? " " Let our Patriarchs be our sureties." " Your Patriarchs are dead, how can they be your sureties ? " " Let our Prophets be our sureties." " Your Prophets are not born, how can they be your sureties ? " Then the women of Israel said to the Prophet : " Let our children be their sureties ; God will teach thee the Torah, thou wilt teach it to the fathers, they will teach it to the children, and the children to their children, and the children of their children to their children's children." And Moses asked the children : " Will ye be the sureties of your fathers before

the Lord ? " They answered : " We will." Then all the children of Israel cried : " Our children will be our sureties ; everything that the Lord shall command, that we will hear and do ; but let Him Himself show us His face. Let Him speak to us with His own voice."

When Moses brought back to the Lord on the mountain the Israelites' answer, God said to him : " For two days let them sanctify themselves, and keep themselves from their wives ; on the third day they shall see Me and shall hear Me. Let none of them go up into the mountain, for they would die ; and thou thyself, My son, go down."

Why, our Rabbis ask, had Moses to go down and stay away, in the midst of the Israelites, when God spoke to them ? Was not God unceasingly near Moses, and was not Moses accustomed to hear the Lord ? But if, when God spoke, Moses had stayed on the mountain, near God, Abiram and Dathan would have said to the Israelites : " It is not God ; it is Moses who is speaking," and the Israelites would have doubted whether it were God.

Now the summer night was so short, and the morning sleep so sweet, that on the third morning, which was the sixth of the month of Sivan, when God descended upon Sinai before Israel, all the children of Israel were still asleep ; Moses, who alone was awake, went through the whole camp waking each one. " Rise up," he said. " O Israel, shake off thy slumber ; thy spouse awaiteth his betrothed beneath the nuptial canopy." And going first, followed by Aaron and his sons, and by all the men, all the women, and all the children, he led the entire congregation to the foot of the mount, over which, as a nuptial canopy, there hung a cloud.

Then was the majesty of the Spouse attested by the mingled roaring of thunder and blaring of trumpets upon

Sinai : and the invisible Presence, with lightnings shattering through wind and tempest, and hail and fire, filled with awful tumult and quaking the upper and the nether deeps.

All the kings of the world in anguished terror sought out Balaam, the Prophet of the Nations, and, trembling, asked him : " Is it the Flood beginning anew ? " " Fools ! Know ye not that the God of Israel gave His promise to Noah that He would never again loose upon the earth the waters of the Flood ? " " If it is not a flood of waters, is it a flood of fire ? " " It is a flood neither of waters nor of flames : it is the God of Israel who is giving to His people His Torah."

And the earth also shuddered in fear : " Is it the Judgment Day ? " she cried. " Shall I have to give up the dead I have eaten, and the blood I have drunk ? " Moses answered : " It is not the world ending, but the world beginning."

And the heavens shook and wept : " Our king is abandoning us ; He is leaving His kingdom." " Nay," answered the Prophet, " God is not abandoning the kingdom of the skies ; He is extending His frontiers to the hearts of men."

And the Lord Himself was sorrowful. " Why art Thou sorrowful," asked Moses, " when Thou givest them Thy Law ? " " Thou seest that I am giving it to them," the Lord answered, " but I see what they will do with it."

Suddenly the cloud opened, Sinai tore out its roots from the wilderness, and, hurtling into the firmament, its broad summit came to rest beneath the flaming feet and flaming wings of the Four Beasts : the Four Beasts, with the heads of a man, of a lion, of an eagle, and of a bull, harnessed to the many-eyed wheels that revolve like Suns beneath the Chariot whose splendour bore the Throne, whose splendour

bore the Splendour of the Lord. And all about, twice sixty myriads of angels, each one of whom bore a girdle of glory and a crown of glory for each one of the children of Israel, cried out unceasingly : " Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Sabaoth : the whole world is full of His glory."

But of a sudden, as God was about to speak, there was Silence in all the universe. Not an ox lowed in all the earth, not a bird twittered in all the skies, the waters ceased their murmur, the flames their crackling ; the thunder was muted, every echo was dumb ; the wings of the Cherubim ceased to beat, and the mouths of the Seraphim to sing : in order, says Rabbi Abbahu that in the silence of all things, all things might know that outside God naught Is.

Then the Lord spoke, saying : I AM.

As these words resounded, filling all space with their vastness, all the children of Israel, save Moses, fled, and their souls fled from their bodies. The Torah returned towards God, asking : " King of the World, sendest Thou me to the living or to the dead ? " " To the living." " But all are dead." " For thee, let them be resurrected." And God rained upon them the dew that reviveth the dead. But as, when they were resurrected, they could sustain neither the weight of His Word nor the sight of His Splendour, He sent two angels to each of the children of Israel : one to put over his heart the girdle of glory, so that his soul should not depart from him, and the other to place on his head the crown of glory, so that his eyes should not die. And thus they could at once both hear and see the Word of the Splendour : for, our Rabbis say, on that day they saw what is heard, and heard what is seen.

And the Word of the Splendour said : " Behold, I am the One God, and I show Myself to thee in My Only Splendour. If one day thou art tempted, and one says to thee : ' Come, let us serve other gods,' thou shalt answer

him : ' Can he serve another god, who has seen, face to face, the One God in His Splendour ? ' Behold, I am the God of every people, yet with Israel alone I make covenant, that through Israel I may be joined to all peoples. Behold, I am God, merciful and everlasting, just and long-suffering, abounding in grace and in truth : if thou obeyest Me, My gifts shall prove My tenderness : if thou disobeyest, My chastising shall prove My love. Profane not My Name, for upon My Name the world is stablished, and he who profaneth My Name destroyeth the world.

" Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy, for the Sabbath is the beginning, in this world, of the world to come. Honour thy father and thy mother, for by honouring them who created thee thou wilt honour thy Creator. Thou shalt not kill, for murder constraineth the God of mercy to vengeance. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet . . . "

And each of these words, after touching the ear of each of the children of Israel, rested upon his mouth and kissed his mouth, as it is written : *Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.*

And not only Israel heard these words, but the seventy nations of the earth heard them also, for the Lord uttered them in seventy languages simultaneously. And not only the living heard them, but also all no longer alive, and all those yet unborn : for, according to the teaching of Rabbi Isaac, all the souls of all the ages were present at Sinai ; all the Prophets, all the Sages heard there and in that hour all the voices, and saw there and in that hour all the visions, which throughout all the ages they had revealed and were to reveal to all mankind. And all heard the same voice and saw the same vision, but, according as each was or would be different, the voice and the vision was different for each.

When the Lord had spoken His first Ten Commandments to the children of Israel, and they had accepted them, all evil left them. And God asked them : " Israel, dost thou wish for My whole Torah, with its three hundred and sixty-five prohibitions, numerous as the days of man's year, and its two hundred and forty-seven injunctions, numerous as the organs of man's body ? " All answered : " Yea, yea." But, in spite of the angels who supported them and the crowns and girdles of glory that bound them they cried to Moses : " We demanded to see Him and hear Him : we can bear it no longer : we are too slight for His voice, too slight for His face. Let Him show Himself to thee ; let Him speak to thee. Thou wilt show us what He shall show thee ; what He shall tell thee, that thou wilt tell us." And then evil re-entered them : but if they had been able to look upon the Lord to the end, and to the end have heard Him, they never had sinned again.

Moses said to them : " Go down from the mount. I will go up alone to God."

CHAPTER XI

THE SCHOOL ON HIGH

It is written : *Moses went into the midst of the cloud.* As to this, our Sages have told us that in the hour when Moses went up into the mountain a cloud came to rest in front of him. He did not know whether he should step into it, or cling to it with his hands. But the cloud opened, the Prophet entered in, and it bore him to the heavens.

First he passed the first heaven, where two angels watch each gate : the gates of prayer and of supplication, of joy and of sorrow, of abundance and of famine, of war and of peace, of conception and of birth, of health and of disease, of life and of death.

In the second heaven he saw the angel Nuriel, with his fifty myriad angels who rule the clouds and the waves, the dew and the tempest ; and in the third heaven, the palace with pillars of red fire, beams of green fire, ceiling of blue fire, and walls of fiery white, where dwell the angels who rule the sun and the moon and all the lesser lights.

At the entrance to the fourth heaven the angel Kemuel, with his twelve thousand destroying angels, stopped him, crying : " Man born of woman and of sin, what comest thou to seek among the holy ones of the Most High ? " " I am the son of Amram," Moses answered, " and I come to receive the Torah from the Lord." And as Kemuel was about to seize him with his flaming hand, Moses, striking him, flung him from the world.

Then, pursuing his way, the Prophet climbed sixty times ten thousand parasangs, to the fifth heaven, where

dwells Hadarniel, whose every word darts forth seventy thousand lightnings. " What comest thou to seek among the holy ones of the Most High, man born of woman and of sin," cried the Angel. And when Moses heard his voice his eyes melted to tears and his soul to terror, and he would have hurled himself from the cloud-top into the abyss. But the Lord was moved with compassion and a daughter[1] of the Voice was heard in sternness: " From the first hours of the world, ye angels whom I have created, ye have been the fomenters of quarrelling. When I desired to create Adam, ye came to accuse him before Me, saying : ' What, then, is man that thou shouldst consider him ? ' and I had to burn you in myriads in order to fulfil the work of My love. Know, then, that if I had not created man the world would have been chaos, and if I do not give him My Torah, to chaos the world will return."

At these words Hadarniel was calmed, and said : " Thou knowest, Lord, that I was ignorant of Thy wish : if it is by Thy wish that he come, I will receive him as the disciple receiveth the master." And, as the disciple accompanieth the master, so led he Moses, by a path that would have taken a mortal five hundred years to climb, to the sixth heaven, where he left him, saying : " Thus far it was permitted me to climb ; higher I cannot : Sandalfon's fire would devour me."

Sandalfon weaves crowns for the Holy One, blessèd be He, and places them on His head. But how can an angel, our Sages ask, crown the Holiest in the Highest ? He cannot. But when Sandalfon has woven a crown, he beseeches the crown, which of itself rises and crowns the head of the Holy One. Then do all the armies of the heights tremble, and the wheels of the heavenly chariot, and His heavenly foot-stool, and the heavenly beasts of His heavenly team,

[1] A daughter of the Voice (Bâth-Kol). The Voice of the Creator is heard, and His Face beheld, in emanations of different degree, according to the powers and sanctity of the creature. Cf. p. 181.—*Trans.*

with all the angels of the crown, and the crown itself, cry out : " Blessèd is the glory of the Lord from His place."

When Moses saw Sandalfon, his eyes melted to tears and his soul to terror, and he would have thrown himself from the cloud-top into the abyss. But, behold, how dear was the Prophet to the Holy One, blessèd be He ! In that hour the Holy One, blessèd be He, Himself descended from His throne and placed between His prophet and His angel, His Splendour, so that the Prophet might pass. And when he had passed before Rigjion, who examines the secrets of the Eternal, and before Gelizur, who proclaims His decrees, Moses entered the School of the Most High. There in semi-circles the angels are ranged, and the angel Zagzagel teaches them the Torah.

When Moses had entered, a clamour arose from all the ranged angels : " Zagzagel, Zagzagel, wilt thou teach the Torah of the Lord to this man ? Will he not say to mankind : ' It is *my* Torah ' ? " Then did the Torah itself rise up. On its right was the archangel Michael, on its left the archangel Gabriel, Uriel was before and Raphael behind, and they bore four standards whereon blazed the east and the west, the north and the south. And the Torah said : " King of the World, hath not this man obeyed me even before knowing me ? Hath he not proclaimed Thy name, kept the Sabbath, honoured his father and his mother ? Hath he not turned away his mouth from lies and blasphemy, his hand from theft and from murder, his flesh from sin and his soul from envy ? What matters it then, Lord, if one day he saith Thy Torah is *his* Torah ? He who obeyeth Thy Torah, is he not as if he had created it ? " And the Holy One, blessèd be He, replied : " Moses, sit thee above the angels : I, Myself, will teach thee my Torah."

Now the Torah contains all things, and Moses first saw in it the six things which, with it, were created before the

Creation ; which are : Penitence, Gehenna, and the Garden of Eden, the Sanctuary and the Throne and the Glory of the Messiah.

In the river of Purgatory, Adam was immersed, doing penance. The wicked who passed by, being led to Gehenna, were saying to him : " Why dost thou not come with us to atone for our sins ? Art thou not the author of all our sinning ? " And he answered the wicked : " I sinned but once ; your sins are your own." The righteous who passed by, going toward the Garden of Eden, were saying to him : " Thou hast but one sin, ours are countless. Why does thine remain, if ours are effaced ? " And he answered them : " My one sin contained all yours ; until the death of sin I must do penance."

When Moses entered Gehenna, the fires of Gehenna withdrew from before him five thousand parasangs, and Nasargiel, the angel of Gehenna, asked the Prophet : " Who art thou ? " " I am the son of Amram." " Thy place is not here ; it is in the Garden of Eden." " I am come to behold, in Gehenna, the justice of God." Then Nasargiel showed him the tortures of the damned, and the place called Alukah, and the place called Tit ha-Yawen, and the place called Abaddon, where all the damned cry out to death : " Death, death, give us death ! " And Moses said to God : " King of the World, save me, save Israel from Gehenna." But God answered him : " The Lord knoweth no favour, neither for thee nor for Israel : who doeth evil falleth into Gehenna ; who doeth good ascendeth into the Garden of Eden."

When Moses entered the Garden of Eden, the light of the Garden advanced before him five thousand parasangs, and Shamshiel, the angel of the Garden of Eden, asked him : " Who art thou ? " " I am the son of Amram." " Thy place is not here ; it is on earth." " I am come to behold in the Garden of Eden the justice of God." Then Shamshiel

showed him the seventy thousand sweet-smelling trees of the Garden of Eden, the least of which is more delightful than all the trees of earth, and bears five thousand different fruits, not one of whose savours is like the savours of earth ; and he showed him the righteous clothed in glory and holding in their hands branches of myrrh, seated beneath baldachins embroidered with golden vines, before tables of pearl, upon seats of sapphire, whence flow four rivers, one of milk, one of honey, one of wine, and one of nard ; and he showed him the highest of these seats, which are those of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. And when the Patriarchs had seen Moses they blessed him, saying : " Blessèd be he who fulfilleth our promises." And the Prophet replied : " Who blesseth in the name of the Lord, blessèd be he."

When Moses entered the Sanctuary On High, Metatron, the angel of the Sanctuary, said to him : " Behold, and thou wilt make a Sanctuary on earth." The veils of the Sanctuary—white, violet, purple, and crimson—were made from the angels' wings, and the torch of the Sanctuary was of stars, and the table of endless fields ; and the laver contained seas, and upon the altar of sacrifice there burned prayers, and upon the altar of incense souls rose in exhalation.

When Moses entered before the Throne of Splendour he saw round the Throne the Seraphim, who have each six wings as wide and as long as the space betwixt earth and heaven. Two of these wings sway, hymning the Lord ; two are lowered to hide from His sight the sins of men ; and the two highest are raised to hide from the Seraphim the blaze of His Splendour. When Moses appeared they ceased from swaying their wings, for his presence was a hymn ; they ceased from lowering their wings, for his presence hid sin ; but they still veiled their faces before the blaze of the Splendour, which the Prophet gazed upon face to face.

When Moses appeared before the Messiah, the head of the Messiah was adorned with seven diadems of gold. And the Holy One, blessèd be He, showing Moses to Him, said : " This is he who beginneth Thy work : wilt Thou desire to complete it ? He has delivered Israel from the servitude of Egypt ; Thou wilt deliver mankind from the bondage of sin. He has given Israel water and manna ; Thou wilt give mankind peace and justice. He, teaching the precepts of the Torah, will lead Israel to the Land of Promise ; Thou, fulfilling the promises of the Torah, wilt make a Land of Promise of all the earth. But the sinners, by their sins, will put an iron yoke upon Thee ; They will stifle Thy breath, Thy tongue will cleave to the roof of Thy mouth ; the whole anguish of all the earth and of all the ages will be Thine anguish. Is Thy will for these things ? "

And the Messiah replied : " In the joy of My heart will I accept all suffering, provided that none in Israel shall be lost, and that none outside Israel shall be lost, and that all shall be helped by My help, not only those who will be living in My days, but those also who will be hidden in the earth ; not only those who will have died in My days, but those also who will have died from the first day to My day ; not only those who have died after having lived, but those also who are born dead, and those also whom Thou hast thought of creating, but hast not created, O Lord. If all the sons of Adam, and Adam himself, are saved by My agony, I will accept all agony. Wherefore learn the Torah, O Moses : thou wilt teach it ; I shall fulfil it.

Then, in order to learn the Torah, Moses remained forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking. Is it possible, Rabbi Meir demands, for a man to go forty nights and forty days without food or drink ? But Moses, he answers, observed, like the angels, the saying : *When thou art in a city, do as the inhabitants thereof.* When the angels

came down, for Abraham's sake, upon the earth where men eat and drink, they ate and they drank : when Moses went up for the Lord's sake, into heaven, where the angels neither eat nor drink, he neither ate nor drank.

And, Rabbi Eleazar bar Ahin asks, how could Moses know, so close and in the presence of God, whether it was night or day ? For are not the shadows, near God, brightness ? But when Moses saw the sun bow down before the Holy One, blessèd be He, he knew that on earth it was night ; and when he saw the moon and the stars bow down before the Holy One, blessèd be He, he knew that on earth it was day.

For forty days and forty nights Moses studied the Torah, thereby teaching the children of Israel that they must study the Torah by night and day. For the Torah contains precepts for all things : for feasting and for fasting, for clothing and for shelter, for sowing and for harvest, for man and for beast, for rich and for poor, for war and for peace, for sorrow and for joy, for prayer and for offerings, for sacrifice and for repentance, for punishment and for mercy, for justice and for love.

For forty days and forty nights he studied the Torah, for to merit a king's crown only three virtues are needed ; a pontiff's crown requires only twenty-four ; but the crown of the Torah requires more than forty. And, look, says Rabbi Hija bar Abba, how much greater is the Torah than the world : to give the world to the world, God needed but seven days ; He needed full forty to give to it the Torah.

Thus for forty days and forty nights Moses studied the Torah ; but what he learnt each day, he forgot each night, and what he learnt each night, he forgot each day. And he said to the Lord : " It is in vain Thou teachest, in vain I learn ; for the Torah is the Torah, and Moses is but Moses." What did God? He took two tables of sapphire, which He had created on the eve of the first Sabbath, at the last

moment of Creation, and with His own hand He inscribed on them, for Moses, the Torah. These two tables were only six feet wide and six feet long, yet He was able to write on them the Ten Commandments, and, between the lines of the Ten Commandments, the two hundred and forty-seven precepts and the three hundred and sixty-five prohibitions of the Torah. And the tables were of such kind that the writing could be read above the stone and beneath the stone and through the stone ; and, although this stone was the hardest of stones, it rolled up like parchment, and had no weight.

And while God wrote upon the sapphire, Moses saw strokes and signs, traced like crowns, linked to the letters of the Torah. And he asked the Holy One, blessèd be He : " King of the World, what are these signs ? What are these strokes ? Would not the letters suffice without their crowns ? " God answered him : " After generations and generations a man shall arise, Akiba his name, and upon each of these strokes and these signs he will heap up new thoughts." " King of the World," said Moses, " permit me to see him." " Return and go." Moses turned, went, and sat down in the eighth row in Akiba's school ; and he heard the Doctor teaching the Torah to his disciples. But he could not understand this Torah, for the Torah Akiba taught was full of new thoughts, which God had not taught to Moses in his Torah. Now Akiba's disciples asked their master : " Rabbi, whence hast thou received this Torah ? " And the Rabbi replied to his disciples : " From the Torah given by God to Moses, upon Sinai."

Then the Prophet questioned the Lord, saying : " Lord, how is this thing possible ? I do not recognise the Torah Thou gavest me. Is this new Torah Thy Torah ? " And God answered him : " There are fifty gateways of understanding ; I have opened for thee forty-nine, but the last

is closed, for no man, even be he Moses, My son, can know everything. The Torah thou understandest hath a thousand senses which thou understandest not, and which others, in the course of the ages, will come to know ; for in each century it will speak the language of that century : but what each century will find is already there, and each new Torah will still be My Torah."

" But why will Akiba come so late in the centuries," Moses asked again. " And why, Lord, choose a Moses when Thou hast an Akiba ? " " Be silent, for such is My decree : Moses is proper to the days of Moses, Akiba to the days of Akiba." " Then, Lord, show me his reward." " Turn, go, and behold ! "

Moses turned, went, and beheld : and he saw Akiba torn asunder by iron combs. " King of the World," he cried, " is this his wage ? " " Be silent, for such is My decree. The wicked receive upon earth the reward for their few good deeds, and in Gehenna the punishment for all their wickedness : the good receive upon earth the punishment for their few evil deeds, and in the Garden of Eden the reward for all their good ones."

And now the hour had come when the Lord would confide into the hands of the Prophet the tables of sapphire. Then did Samael, the angel of death, rise up from the abyss. He was so huge that it would take seven times five hundred years to go from his feet to his head ; and from head to foot he was covered with eyes that watched fixedly. And Moses implored the Lord, saying : " Lord God and God of my fathers, let me never fall into his hands." " Be silent," God answered him, " for such is My decree : all men must die. But if the children of Israel observe My Torah, Israel shall never die. For I, the Eternal, Myself obey this Torah that to-day I give to thee. By this same law that divides the Sabbath from the other days I have divided night from day,

and I leave them divided : by this same law that divides Israel from the other peoples, I have divided the land from the sea, and I leave them divided ; by this same law that divides good from evil, I have divided the world from chaos, and I leave them divided. And behold I am not as a king of flesh and blood, who giveth a gift, but withholdeth himself ; I give thee My Torah, and with My Torah I give Myself to thee. I am in no wise like a king of flesh and blood, who commandeth his servant, and never obeyeth him ; for if thou command Me, thou My Prophet, in the name of My Law, I, thy Lord, in the name of My Law, will obey thee. And now remember that in My Torah justice and mercy are commingled ; for if it were all mercy, how would sin not destroy the world ? and if it were all justice, how would justice not destroy the sinner ? Wherefore, since it is permitted thee to behold Me face to face, when My face is justice let thine be mercy." And as Moses received into his hands the tables of sapphire, the Splendour of the Torah lit his face, and this splendour never left him after. And he blessed the Torah, saying : " Praise be to Thee, O Lord, our God, who choosest Thy Law and choosest Thy people, and who blessest Thy people when it chooseth Thy Law."

But other angels had risen up about Samael : Af, the angel of wrath, Hemah, Dumah, and Mavet, Raguel, Sariel, and Jerahmiel, and with them the Arelim, the Malakim, the Hashmallim, the Shinannim, the Tarshishim and the Ofanim, crying : " King of the World, King of the World, wilt Thou then confide to dust and nothingness the Torah that was born before the seas and the hills, Thy Torah that is Thy wisdom, Thy treasure Thy vastness ? " " Answer them," said the Lord to the Prophet. " They will burn me with their breath." " Take hold of My throne of glory, and answer them."

Then Moses spoke to them : " What is there in this

Torah that God desireth to give to me? *I am the Lord Thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.* Went ye into Egypt, angels of heaven ; served ye Pharaoh? *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.* Live ye then, among idolaters ; have ye to break your idols ? *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.* What is your work, that from it ye must rest ? *Honour thy father and thy mother.* Where are your fathers, where your mothers, to be honoured ? *Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery.* Do ye then know murder, envy, lust ? The Torah of heaven is made for earth : let it descend upon earth."

But all the angels pressed round Moses in a flaming multitude, desiring to destroy him. Then God threw upon the Prophet's shoulders the mantle of His invisible glory, and said to him : " Go down." And Moses went down, bearing in his arms the Tables of the Torah, and on his face its Splendour.

In this very hour, according to Rabbi Johanan ben Levi, Satan appeared before the Lord and asked him : " King of the World, where is the Torah ? " " I have given it to the earth." Satan went to the earth and asked her : " Where is the Torah ? " The earth answered : " God knows its way, He alone knows its place." He went to the sea, which cried : " It is not with me " ; to the abyss, which cried, " Neither with me " ; to pestilence and death, who cried, " We have heard tell of it, but where it is we know not." Satan returned to God, saying : " King of the World, I have sought the Torah through all the earth and have found it not." " Go to the son of Amram."

And Satan went to Moses, who was going down the mountain, and asked him : " Where is the Torah that the Lord hath given thee ? " And Moses, who had hidden the Torah beneath the mantle of invisible glory, answered

him : " Who am I, that the Lord should have given me the Torah ? "

Then God chided the Prophet : " What, My son, thou hast lied ? " But Moses answered before the face of the Lord : " King of the World, Thou hadst a hidden treasure, which was Thy joy to Thee each day—and *I* would have boasted its possession ? " And God said to His servant : " Since thou findest thyself small before the Torah, behold, it shall be called by thy name." And thus it is written : *Remember the Torah of Moses, My servant.*

CHAPTER XII

THE GOLDEN CALF

For forty days Joshua, son of Nun, had awaited Moses upon the slopes of the mount. When the Prophet rejoined him, lo, they both heard a tumult rising up to them : " I hear a noise of war," said Joshua. " Man of war," replied Moses, " it is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome ; but cries cried out to an idol." Then Joshua, with his younger stride outstripping the Prophet, ran to the camp of the Israelites.

As Moses went, the word of the Lord thundered through space : " Go down, Moses : thy people hath denied Me." " Why dost Thou call them *my* people ? " asked the Prophet. " Were they not *Thy* people when Thou didst command me, ' Go bring up out of Egypt My people Israel ' ? I said to Thee then : ' They are stained with sin.' And Thou didst answer me : ' I will take away their sin.' And now, because Thy wrath kindleth against *Thy* sons, Thou namest them *my* sons." " They are My sons when they obey ; when they obey not, they are no longer Mine." " Where hast Thou brought them up, that they should remain pure ? Thou hast made them grow up in the land of graven images ; and Thou wouldst have them worship Thee ? " " But have I not saved them out of Egypt ? Did I not divide the waters to set them free ? " " How long ago ? Yesterday they were slaves ; and to-day Thou wouldst have them men ? "

To what may we liken the matter ? asks Rab Huna. To that Sage who had opened for his son a perfume shop in the

street of harlots. One evening, having surprised him with a courtesan, he was going to thrash him, but a friend caught his arm, saying : " Thou hast despised for thy son all the trades of the city and all the streets of the city ; thou hast made him a perfumer in the street of harlots, and thou thinkest he will not frequent courtesans ? " In the same way Moses said to God : " Thou hast despised for Israel all the dignities of earth and all the lands of earth ; Thou hast made them slaves in the land of idolaters, and Thou thinkest they will not be idolaters ? "

To what may we liken the matter ? asks Rabbi Simeon ben Jehozadok. To that king who bought a field and told his gardener to plant a vine in it. The gardener dug the field and planted the vine. The vine grew and yielded wine ; but the wine was sour. " What is the good of this vine ? Pull it up," the king ordered. " Why," asked the gardener, " because its wine is not sweet ? It is still too young. Let me tend it, and its wine will be sweet." In like fashion Moses said to the Lord : " Israel is scarce come out of bondage and idolatry ; their souls are still wild ; let me teach them, and they will soften. Behold Thy people Israel, O Lord ; are they not already less distant from Thy Splendour ? When, in Egypt, I spake unto them Thy Name, did they not believe me ? " " But since, they have stoned thee." " When they passed dry-shod through the sea, did they not sing unto Thee a song ? " " But since, they have blasphemed Me." " And were they not, upon Sinai, the one people to accept Thy Torah, which all other peoples had refused ? " " But since, they have transgressed. Each time I have pardoned them. I am weary of pardon. I have said : *The idolater shall die.* Upon My life, he shall, surely."

When Moses entered the camp of the children of Israel, he saw the Idol standing there. It was a calf of gold. Before

the golden calf was a golden altar, and, beside the altar, Aaron. And the Israelites were dancing and singing : " This is our god, the god of Egypt, that shall lead us back into Egypt." And, dancing and singing, they were offering upon the altar, to this god, the manna of God.

The Prophet took up a hammer, and with his mighty arms smashed the Idol, and made of it a dust of gold upon the dust of sand. Then, lifting up the hammer against Aaron his brother, he cried : " How hast thou permitted this thing ? " " Thou didst not return, Moses my brother," Aaron answered him ; " and Satan went all about the Israelites, saying : ' He will not return.' One day they sought out Eleazar and Ithamar, my sons, and Phinehas and Caleb, crying : ' Moses will not return ; we no longer have a god ; make us a god.' My sons would not, nor Caleb nor Phinehas. Then Satan made your likeness float between earth and heaven in the likeness of a shroud ; and they went to seek the Elders, crying : " Moses is dead ; we no longer have a god ; make us a god." And, as the Elders would not, they said : " Let us ourselves make us a god, a god that we can hear and see without dying, a god of Egypt, to lead us back into Egypt." And when Hur, Miriam our sister's son, sought to prevent them, they tore his body from his soul. Then I said to them : ' I myself will make you a god.' I thought in my heart : ' I will begin to make the god, and, before the god is finished, Moses will return, bringing back the true God.' Therefore I said to them : ' Ask your women for their jewels : out of them we will make a god.' For I thought in my heart : ' The women will not want to give them.' And in sooth they did refuse, for the women of Israel hold fast to their jewels and fear the Eternal ; and because they refused, they shall be blessèd among all other women. But the men brought their own nose-rings, crying : ' We will kill thee like Hur if thou dost not make us the god.' Was I then to let murder defile them, as well as idolatry ?

Would the god have lived any the less had I perished ? And, since the sin had to be, was it not better that it should be upon me than upon them ? Thou didst not return ; I finished the god."

While he spoke, the hammer, slipping from Moses' right hand, fell to the ground ; but from the two tables of sapphire, that the Prophet held in his left the Voice of the Lord came forth, still crying : " I have said : *The idolater shall die ;* upon My life, he shall, surely." " Where hast Thou said it," Moses asked Him ; " in Thy Torah ? And to whom hast Thou given Thy Torah ? To them or to me ? " " Upon the mount I commanded : ' Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,' and at the foot of the mount they sware saying : ' All that God shall command we will do and hear.' " " But knew they the punishment, the death of the idolater, that Thy hand wrote in Thy Torah after ? Thou didst spare Cain, because he killed, not knowing the punishment for killing, and Thou wouldst punish them by a law that they knew not ? " " I will consume them from the face of the earth ; and I will make My people come forth from thee alone." " Blot me rather from Thy Torah, King of the World ; or, rather, let me blot from the world Thy Torah. I alone knew it, I alone shall have sinned, if I alone shatter it."

And he brandished above his head the two tables of sapphire, to cast them down to the ground. In vain did Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua, Eleazar and Ithamar and the Elders, strive to tear them from him ; his giant arms outreached them. But when the Torah was already leaving his opened palms, lo ! of a sudden the signs graven in the sapphire by the hand of the Lord, like a multitude of birds escaped from some vast cage, flew up to heaven ; and the two tables of heaven, deserted by heaven, of a sudden took on the weight of earth, and broke into fragments upon the earth.

To what may this be likened ? asks Rabbi Samuel bar

Nahman. To that envoy whom a king sent to espouse his bride in his name. When the envoy came to seek her, he found that she had defiled her flesh with another. What did he? He tore up the contract of marriage, saying: "It were better for her to be judged as a maid than as a bride." In the same way Moses thought: "It were better for the congregation of Israel, since the Torah condemneth them, not to be united to God by the Torah." And he shattered the Torah.

Now as soon as he had shattered it, the order of the world was shattered. The stars, the moon, the sun, which each night and each day go up to the Lord to ask Him to light the universe, sought Him everywhere, and found Him no more; and while they, prostrate before the harnessed beasts of the heavenly chariot, cried: "Where is God? Where is God?" the ocean, leaving its divinely ordained limits, hurled a new deluge upon the earth. Then Moses asked the waters: "Floods from the deep, what come ye to do upon the dry sand?" "Naught now keeps us to the deep," the waters made answer; "the world *was* only through the Torah, and for the sake of sinners thou hast shattered the Torah." "All those who have sinned I abandon to you," the Prophet replied; "but let Israel remain and let the world remain." And he made all the children of Israel drink of the golden dust of the Idol mingled with the waters of the sea. Those who had worshipped the Idol, to the number of three thousand, perished; and the ocean withdrew.

Our Doctors say that the trial of dust mingled with water was, according to the Torah of Israel, the trial of the woman taken in adultery; wherefore the whole congregation of Israel was subjected to it on that day of its first adultery.

But the wrath of the Lord was not appeased; He sent a pestilence to devour the camp. A voice wept from Sinai:

" Weep, weep over the Torah." And Moses knelt down upon each rock of Sinai, weeping to the Lord : " Remember Marah, King of the World ; there Thou madest sweetness out of bitterness ; do not now make bitterness more bitter. I have destroyed the Idol and the idolaters : for three thousand sinners must a whole people perish ? " God answered him : " Those who had not yet, at thine arrival, worshipped the golden calf were about to worship it when thou arrivedst. From the moment thou didst leave them to go up into the mount, from the moment even when they had sworn unto Me ' We will have no other gods,' in their hearts they worshipped them." " Lord, I ask of Thee but what Abraham asked of Thee in the days of Sodom : if there be found ten righteous among them, let all be forgiven for the ten's sake." " Where dost thou find them, these ten righteous ? " " Caleb, Joshua, Phinehas, Ithamar, Eleazar, Aaron, and myself." " Thou hast only seven there." " Is there a resurrection of the dead, King of the World ? " " What, my son ; did I not show thee in the Garden of Eden that the dead rise again ? " " Then to these seven add three risen from the dead. If all these sinners have deserved exile, remember Jacob, who, for Thee, went into exile to serve Laban ; if they have deserved the sword, remember Isaac, who, for Thee, lay under the knife of Abraham ; if they deserve fire, remember Abraham, who, for Thee, went into Nimrod's furnace. If thou wilt not do this thing, what will these risen Patriarchs say ? Didst Thou not promise them that Thyself would lead their seed into the Promised Land ? Have there been a thousand generations from theirs to mine : and didst Thou not promise unto the thousandth generation Thy grace to the generations of Thy servants ? Destroy then earth and heaven, if Thou dost not keep Thy word, King of the World, since it is Thy word that upholdeth heaven and earth."

At these words the heart of the Lord was softened, and He said to Moses : " I will stay the pestilence ; and I will send an angel before Israel, to keep them in the way." " Lord, every nation hath an angel to lead it ; but only the nation that the Lord leadeth dieth not. Must Israel then die like another ? " " Have I not sworn : 'The idolater shall die ? ' And is not Israel idolatrous as another ? " " Nay, nay, King of the World, let Israel be Thy people and let their God lead them ; and let them go with their God whithersoever their God shall lead them."

The Lord answered him no more. Then Moses, feeling that the Holy One, blessèd be He, wished to forgive, took his tent and set it in the wilderness, a thousand parasangs from the camp of the Hebrews, saying : " Whom the master leaveth, the servant also deserteth."

Each day Aaron, and his sons, and the Elders, and all in Levi, and all in Israel, went out to seek him in his tent with words of supplication : " Come back to us, Moses ; give back to us our Torah ; give back to us our God." And the Lord Himself said to the Prophet : " Return into their midst. What will become of them without Me, if they are also without thee ? Did I not command thee, saying : ' When My face is justice, thine shall be mercy.' " " Wherefore," replied Moses," should I, who am only a man, be more merciful than Thou, who art God ? Have I greater part in their fault than God ? When the pot breaketh, blamest thou the pot, or the potter ? The instinct of evil hath perverted them : who put it into them, they or Thou, Lord ? " " Moses, my son, forty-nine doors of understanding are opened unto thee : the fiftieth is closed, have I not told thee ? Thou must not yet know wherefore God hath put the instinct of evil into man." " But Thou, didst Thou not know their fault in advance, O Lord ? When Thou gavest me the Torah, Thy countenance was sad ; already

Thou beheldest them transgressing the Torah ; could they then *not* transgress ? " " Man cannot know how God can foresee all, and man yet be free." " Then how shall he know if he sin or sin not ? Did not Thine Israelites, in the days of Sinai, behold, beside the likenesses of an eagle and a lion and a man, harnessed to Thy heavenly chariot, the likeness of a bull ? Did they not think still to worship Thee, Lord, by worshipping this likeness of a fragment of Thy power ? Since Thou art in every place, since Thou canst do all things, then share the universe with the Idol, so that man may understand Thee. Let the Idol light the sun, Thou the moon ; let it suffer the tempest, Thou the gentle winds ; let it sow the rye, and Thou the wheat ; let it multiply the flesh, and Thou the spirit." " Moses, my son, blasphemest thou in thy turn ? Thou knowest well that the Idol is naught." " If it be naught, Lord, why art Thou wroth against it ? And why, if Thy sons have worshipped naught, art Thou wroth against them ? "

At these words the face of God smiled ; and when Moses beheld this smile he perceived that God had forgiven. But the Lord said unto him : " I have sworn : *The idolater shall die* ; I cannot deny My oath ; I have vowed to lead Israel no more ; I cannot deny My vow." Then, according to Rabbi Berechiah, Moses replied : " King of the World, didst Thou not Thyself tell me that Thou obeyedst Thy Torah, for he who commandeth in the name of the Law must the first submit himself to the Law ? And hast Thou not, in Thy Law, ordained : ' If a man swear upon oath, he must accomplish all that his mouth hath uttered ; but a Sage may set him free from his oath ? ' " And God replied to him : " Be thou the Sage, My son, who shall free Me from My oath."

And it is for this, according to our Rabbis, that it is written : *Moses sate upon the mount* ; for how could Moses have sat down before God if it had not been to free him

from his oath ? He sate down, wrapped in his mantle, and God, standing before him, said unto him : " I have sworn to lead Israel no more, I have vowed Israel to death. I repent Me of my oath ; I regret My vow." And Moses, blessing the Lord, answered Him : " The oath is no more, the vow hath ceased." It is for this, according to our Rabbis, that it is written : *Moses, the man of God.* Moses was the man of God because he freed God from His oath.

When Moses saw that the Lord had forgiven, he sorrowed to have shattered the Torah. But the Eternal said to him : " Be comforted, I will give thee back the Torah." And, like a king who writeth anew the torn-up contract when he taketh back the wife he hath put away, He rewrote before Moses the whole Torah. But the first Torah had been written On High, upon the sapphire of heaven ; the second was written on earth, upon earth's granite. And this, again, is why, say our Sages, " The Torah speaks the language of man ; it is no longer in heaven, it is on earth."

For forty days, in fasting, in prayer, and in repentance, the children of Israel had awaited the forgiveness of the Lord ; and the day on which the Torah, as the sign of forgiveness, was given back to them by the Lord was the tenth of the month of Tishri. And God commanded Moses : " Let this day be unto you a day of forgiveness, unto you and unto your children, and unto your children's children in the generations of your generations." And each year this day is, in this world, the day of forgiveness for all in Israel ; the day upon which is stablished the world, and which shall continue even in the next world, when shall be blotted out all the days of the world.

Thus did the Tables of granite succeed the Tables of sapphire, and the forgiveness of the Lord the sin of the

golden calf. But if the children of Israel had not worshipped the golden calf in the wilderness, they would have studied the sapphire Torah in the land of their fathers to the end of days : and because in the wilderness they worshipped the golden calf, in mourning and exile to the end of days will they study the granite Torah. For, our Sages say, every sin of Israel is a remainder of the sin of the golden calf, and in every generation in Israel there remains an ounce of the gold of the golden calf.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GLORY OF THE TABERNACLE

It is written : *I will dwell among them.* Our Teachers comment upon this that, when God had forgiven the Israelites for the adoration of the golden calf, they could not believe He had forgiven them. The angels had taken back from them the girdles of glory and the crowns of glory that they had received at the word of the Lord ; and now they, who once had looked face to face upon the Splendour of the Lord, could not even behold without lowering their eyes the reflection which, unknown to him, shone upon Moses' face.

Then the Prophet said to the Holy One, blessèd be He: "King of the World, I know that Thou hast forgiven them; but they know it not, and the world knoweth it not." "As surely as thou livest," the Lord made answer, " they shall know it, and the world shall know it, for to show it I will dwell among them. Wherefore, make Me a Sanctuary among the children of Israel. There they shall bring Me their offerings, and the redemption of their sins."

At these words Moses trembled : " How am I to make Thee, Lord, a sanctuary great enough for Thee to dwell among us ? Can the whole world contain Thee ? " " I ask from man according to his measure, not Mine," God answered. " Twenty boards on the north side will suffice, and twenty on the south, and six toward the east, and six toward the west ; for My greatness can, when I will, enclose the Infinite, and when I will it can be enclosed in Nothingness.

"And how, Lord, bring Thee offerings? Could all the fruits of all the orchards, all the beasts of all the stalls, suffice Thee?" "I ask from man according to his measure, not Mine," God answered. "A lamb at morning and a lamb at evening will suffice: and ye shall eat its flesh. For God esteemeth not the burnt offering, but the willing heart that offereth it." "And how, Lord, shall we redeem our sins? For art not Thou, the master of all riches, more poor in riches than we are rich in sin?" "I ask of man according to his measure, not Mine," God answered. "The least coin of the basest metal in the purse of the poor will suffice Me, if ye repent and make reparation for your faults; for it sufficeth not to be pure before God; ye must be pure before men also."

Wherefore Moses assembled the congregation of Israel and said to them: "God hath forgiven you; but ye think Him far off; now He would give you His Presence. Have not the kings of flesh and blood palaces where their table is set, their torches lighted, their throne raised up? Why, then, should the Lord not have, like them, His palace on earth, for a witness that He is our King and the King of all the earth? Assuredly the Holy One, blessèd be He, hath no need of such things: how should He need a table set before Him who feedeth all the world; torches, who lighteth the universe; a throne among you, who is enthroned throughout all space? But though He hath no need of these things, yet will He accept them as the witness of your love. When a father hath a son he careth for him and feedeth him and clotheth him and sheltereth him until he is grown up; and when the father hath grown old, it is the son, in his turn, who careth for his father, and feedeth him, and habiteth and sheltereth him. God hath treated you as sons until this day; treat Him now as a father, and He, by accepting your unneeded gifts, will show to all the world that ye are His children. Bring me therefore cedar,

and skins of beasts, and veils of blue and purple and scarlet, to make Him a Sanctuary ; and also gold and silver and brass and jewels, and oil and spices and balm and sweet incense. Ye will offer Him but what already is His ; and yet each of your offerings, however near to you it be, shall be as precious in His eyes as if ye had brought it from the end of the world. And when the Tabernacle is made, the Holy One, blessèd be He, who dwelt with the Torah in heaven among the angels, will with His Torah inhabit the earth, and dwell among you."

Consider, say our Teachers, how strange is the race of the children of Israel, who rightly are compared to the dust of the earth and to the stars of heaven. These same Hebrews who before had broken up for the Idol their nose-rings, now broke up for the Tabernacle their nose-rings and their ear-rings and their finger-rings, their seals and their necklaces ; expiating five times, by the gold of the Tabernacle, the gold of the golden calf. Not content in their zeal to lavish their own gems, they seized and presented the jewels of their wives. But their wives, in yet more fervent zeal, came to Moses bringing myrrh and nard and perfumes of every kind, and diamonds and pearls and the precious stones of every land, and purple and fine linen and costly stuffs of every colour. And as the Prophet hesitated to accept them, they said to him : " If thou wilt not receive of us what we have received of our husbands, let them give it to thee in our names ; but here are our mirrors of bronze : they are ours wholly ; receive them of us." At these words Moses was about to chase them out, crying : " Should I then profane things holy by the things of concupiscence ? " But God said to him : " Dost then not know that I myself did dress Eve's hair, that the first woman might please the more the first man ? Verily these mirrors that they bring thee are dearer to me than the treasure of kings, for to them I owe My people. When they were in Egypt, and returned to their

homes after the toil of their bondage, their wives gave them meat and drink ; then they drew up their mirrors unto them, and therein mirrored their faces side by side, and said to them as they caressed them : ' Behold thou art fair, and I am fairer than thou.' Then they forgot their bondage, and, coupling with their wives in the joy of their flesh, they multiplied the children and the souls of Israel. Wherefore accept these mirrors of the desire that is sanctified by human love, and out of them make the laver of pure water that shall sanctify My priests in My love."

The riches of the camp piled up before Moses. So great was their ardour that after two days the Prophet had to announce that God wanted no more ; and when on the third day the Princes of the tribes came with their gifts, he refused them : the People had given too much. Thus, say our Sages, the children of Israel returned to their Father what they had received from Him ; but He, in the end of time, shall give it back to them ; for then, through all Eternity, they shall be sustained in His glory and clothed in His glory beneath the Tabernacle of His glory.

When Moses had gathered up all this treasure he asked the Holy One, blessèd be He : " How shall I make Thy Sanctuary ? " The Holy One answered him : " Have I not shown it thee in heaven ? All that is On High must be on earth. Make my Dwelling-place on earth like that On High." " Am I a god, to make it so ? " " Behold, the Book of the Generations of Adam, in it are written the destinies of every mortal, from the birth of living things to the resurrection of the dead. In it thou wilt find the name of him whom I have named by his name to build My Sanctuary."

Moses read, and found the name ; it was Bezalel, the son of Hur, whom the Israelites had killed when he had sought to stop them from making the Idol ; and because Hur had died in order that the Idol should not be made, God had

chosen Bezalel, his son, to make the Tabernacle, and Solomon, the son of his sons, to make the Temple. Bezalel, like Solomon after him, was filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding ; his name signifies " In the shadow of God " ; and, as it is written, *A good name is better than precious ointment ;* for, say our Rabbis, whither goeth the perfume of precious ointment ? From the sleeping-chamber unto the feasting-chamber ; but a good name goeth from one end of the world to the other.

When Moses had chosen, according to the Lord's choice, the name of Bezalel, God said to him : " Seemeth Bezalel to thee meet for the task ? " " He is meet to me, King of the World, if he be meet to Thee." " Nevertheless, go ask the children of Israel if he seemeth good to them," the Lord said to him. The Prophet questioned them. They answered : " He is acceptable to us, if he is acceptable to God, and to thee." But at the side of Bezalel, who was of the tribe of Judah, Moses placed Oholiab, who was of the tribe of Dan ; for, says Rabbi Hanina ben Pazzi, there is naught greater than Judah and naught smaller than Dan ; but there is neither great nor small in the eye of the Eternal.

Wherefore Moses commanded Bezalel to make the Tabernacle. But Bezalel asked him : " Moses, our master, wherefore the Tabernacle ? " " To receive within it the Torah." " But where shall we set the Torah ? " " When thou hast made the Tabernacle, thou shalt make the Ark for the Torah." " Is it good that the Torah should await, unhoused, the house of the Tabernacle ? Let us first make the Ark for the Torah ; then the Tabernacle." " Truly," said the Prophet, " thou dost merit thy name ; for, by thy wisdom, thou livest in the shadow of God."

So Bezalel began with the Ark for the Torah, which is Light ; thus following the example of God, who created Light before aught else, at the Creation. And the Ark had

to be of great beauty ; for it is like that king, Rabbi Judah bar Ilai says, who, having a most beautiful daughter, commanded, saying : " Make for my daughter a beauteous throne, so that by her throne shall her beauty be known." In the same way the Lord commanded Moses : " Make for My daughter the Torah a beautiful Ark, so that by her Ark shall her beauty be known."

Rabbi Hanina and Resh Lakish were not of the same opinion as to the coffers of the Ark. According to Rabbi Hanina it was made of three coffers ; one was of gold, inside which Bezalel put one of cedar, inside which he put another of gold. According to Resh Lakish it was made of a single coffer of cedar, which Bezalel overlaid with gold within and without.

Then above the Ark he set the Cherubim of gold, which each measured one span, and had each two wings, measuring ten spans, the whole corresponding to the twenty-two letters of the divine alphabet used to write the Torah, and to create, through the Torah, heaven and earth.

And it was from between the two Cherubim set upon the Ark that the Presence of God spoke henceforth to Moses ; for not for any man, not Moses even, has the Presence of God ever come quite down to earth, as likewise for God no man, not Moses even, has ever gone quite up to the Most High Place in heaven. And these Cherubim were two in number, one for Elohim, who is Justice, the other for Adonai, who is Mercy : for Mercy and Justice are the two faces of the Lord. And these two faces were half turned each from each ; but when Israel was united in love and peace, they turned and beheld one another, and their beholding and their lips were made one in their kissing, for, as it is written in the holy Zohar[1], *When man is at one, God is One.*[2]

[1] *The Book of the Splendour*, the best known of them any books of the Kabbala.—*Trans.*

[2] This phrase is untranslatable, except by a series of interpretations.—*Trans.*

In the Sanctuary On High, Moses had seen, in front of the Throne of Splendour, a table and a candlestick. He was able to remember the table, and could paint it in words for Bezalel, who made one like it of cedar wood overlaid with gold and with a border of gold about it ; and this table, in reminder of the feasting of the Righteous in the Garden of Eden, had upon it twelve loaves of bread, in reminder of the twelve months of the year that the sun sustaineth, and the twelve tribes of Israel that sustaineth the Lord God.

But Moses could not remember the Candlestick to paint it in words. He returned to God, who showed it to him, made of white fire and red fire and green fire and black fire. But scarce had he come down ere he had once more forgotten ; and twice again it was so. Then God said : " Command Bezalel to make the Candlestick ; he will do it." And at once, without speaking any word, Bezalel made it, with its golden lilies and golden fruits and seven golden branches, each of which, lighting a flame, was to recall the seven days that their round lights up in the week, and the seven stars that their round lights in heaven. And when the Candlestick was made, Moses said to Bezalel : "I had seen it three times, and three times forgotten it ; thou, without having seen it, hast remembered it. Glory, Bezalel, to thine art, the shadow of the Eternal, which createth, for the Eternal, the shadow of His light."

Then he commanded Bezalel to make two altars like those he had seen in the Sanctuary On High ; one for burnt offerings, in reminder of man's body, the other for incense, in reminder of man's soul. The altar of burnt offerings was of brass, the incense-altar of gold, for the soul is more precious than the body ; but both served each day, for each day must man serve God, with his whole soul and with his whole body.

When these works were done, Bezalel and Oholiab, with their wise-hearted workmen, began the Tabernacle. But of all the skins of beasts, only the skin of the tahash,[1] which is thirty cubits long, was meet for the curtains of the Tabernacle ; and of all the kinds of cedar, only the cedar of Shittim, that excels among all cedars, was meet for the planks of the Tabernacle. And when the cedars of Shittim had been brought for the planks of the Tabernacle, the cedars began to sing ; and when the skins of the tahash had been brought for the curtains of the Tabernacle, the tahash disappeared from the world. Bezalel and Oholiab fashioned and set up the planks ; then they fashioned and set up the curtains.

The Tabernacle was of seventy cubits, because of the seventy nations of the earth, and it had seventy curtains, because of the seventy names of Israel, and it contained seventy vessels, because of the seventy names of the Lord : for it was to unite the nations with Israel, and Israel with the Lord.

And thus was the whole work of the Tabernacle, created by the art of Bezalel, like the whole work of the six days created by the Creator : the double stone of the Torah set in the Ark was like heaven and earth, set in the void on the First Day ; the blue veil divided the Holy One from the Holy of Holies as the firmament divided the waters above from the waters below on the Second Day ; the golden table bore the pure wheat as the earth had born grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit, on the Third Day ; the golden Candlestick bore its flames, as the lights had born light upon the Fourth Day ; the Cherubim with their wings flew like the birds on the Fifth Day ; and, as man had been created in Eden in the image of God, so on the Sixth Day the priest in the

[1] A species of seal.—*Trans.*

Sanctuary was to purify the image of man before the face of God, to the End of Days. This is why, our Sages say, before the Tabernacle the world was still unfirm, and the creation of the Tabernacle was to make firm the Creation.

But the work of Bezalel and Oholiab and their wise-hearted workmen was not yet finished ere the children of Israel murmured against the Prophet yet again. When he rose up early, the Israelites, so says Rabbi Hija, said behind his back : " Behold the son of Amram, who riseth early to get in his provision of manna before us, and take the best from us." When he rose up late, the Israelites said before his face : " Behold the son of Amram, who riseth late ; he ate too much manna last night ; neither his wife nor his son have been able to wake him." When he walked among the multitude in his great humility, the Israelites pointed at him near by, saying : " Behold the son of Amram, how he walketh among us, that we may bow to him." When, in his humility, he held himself aloof, the Israelites pointed at him afar, saying : " Behold the son of Amram, how he holdeth aloof, to make it plain that he is greater than we." And according to Rabbi Hama, Dathan and the other calumniators went everywhere saying : " Ye have brought unto him brass and silver and gold and jewels : have ye made account of them ? This dreamer was not rich, before the Tabernacle ; nor will he be poor, after." And all cried out : " Let him account ! Let him account ! "

And therefore Moses, having assembled them, enumerated all that he had received and spent. But Korah, Pharaoh's former treasurer, who could compute more quickly than the rest, rose up and cried : " One thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels are missing ! " That sum actually was missing, and the mob were already howling upon him savagely when, before their eyes, the cramps that Oholiab and Bezalel had nailed to the staves

of the Tabernacle began to flash like a multitude of stars ; they were the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels, that the Prophet had not counted. Korah had to cease from his calumny, and the multitude to bow down.

But when in the month of Kislev the work of Oholiab and Bezalel and their wise-hearted workmen was finished, the muttering broke forth anew. It was not enough to have assembled the Tabernacle : it had now to be raised up. But God did not will that His Presence should descend into it until the anniversary of the birth of Isaac, whom Abraham had offered to the Lord upon the rock Moriah, Israel's first altar.

Certain of the people who knew this not sought out the wise-hearted workmen who had helped Oholiab and Bezalel, and said to them : " Why sit ye idle, ye slothful ! Raise up the Tabernacle, that God may come down into it." But the workmen could not raise it up. Then they of the people sought out Bezalel and Oholiab, and said to them : " Ye slothful, wherefore sit ye idle ? Raise up the Tabernacle, that God may come down into it." But neither Oholiab nor Bezalel could raise it up.

Then the Israelites came to Moses, crying : " Thou hast commanded us to bring thee cedar wood and skins of beasts, veils of purple and of scarlet, of crimson and of blue, brass and silver, and gold and jewels, oil and spices, and balm and sweet incenses ? Have we refused thee aught ? But what shall the Tabernacle profit us, if they who have made it cannot raise it up ? Thou didst tell us : ' God will come down among you.' Didst lie, then ? Had not God promised it unto thee ? Then for whom hast thou taken our all from us ? For Him, or for thyself ? "

Moses besought the Lord, saying : " What am I to answer unto them, King of the World ? Why dost Thou will

that the Tabernacle be not raised up ? " And the Eternal answered him : " Moses, My son, I have read in thy heart that thou wast grieved to have no part in the building of My Sanctuary : the children of Israel have furnished the thirteen materials ; Oholiab and Bezalel have assembled them ; but I have desired to show unto every man that the offerings of all and the work of all would be naught without thee. Now go, raise up the Tabernacle." " How can I, Lord ? " " Go : thou shalt accomplish it."

And it came to pass that when Moses had but touched the Tabernacle, as it lay vast upon the ground, by itself the Tabernacle rose up ; and when, like the world, with its firmament and its mountains and its plains and its seas, it was wholly risen up, then the altar of the body and the altar of the soul, and the table for bread and the laver for water, and the Candlestick of stars—all, by themselves, went in and ranged themselves with the Throne of the Torah. And all the children of Israel cried : " Blessèd be the Lord God, who blesseth Moses."

CHAPTER XIV

THE DAY OF THE TEN CROWNS

The Tabernacle was reared, but the Splendour of God did not yet inhabit it. For see how modest was Moses: just as he had not gone up to the burning bush until the Lord had called him, so he would not enter the Tabernacle until he had received from the Lord a sign. He pondered in his heart: "Is it I, or another, whom He will choose for His High Priest?"

Then Abiram the scoffer renewed his scoffing: "The Tabernacle is reared; but where is God? We were promised His Presence; can ye see it? I cannot." And Moses answered; "In order that the Holy One, blessèd be He, descend among you, ye must be purified by one who hath no impurity."

And as he was asking himself who this pure one would be, the Lord commanded him, saying: "Number thine Israelites from twenty years old and upwards; and let each bring thee a half-shekel for the redemption of his soul; but thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi among the children of Israel, and thou shalt account Joseph as two tribes, in the names of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh." "Why number them, King of the World?" the Prophet questioned Him; "Thou hast seventy nations in the world, and Thou dost not command me to number them."

"All are My nations," the Lord answered him; "but Israel is My flock; and, like the shepherd whose sheep a

wolf hath followed after, so must I know what remaineth unto Me."

So every man brought a half-shekel for the service of the Tabernacle, and Moses numbered them. And there were six hundred thousand save three thousand; for the Israelites were six hundred and three thousand when they went up out of Egypt; and three thousand had died by the sin of the golden calf, and three thousand by the pestilence that came after the sin of the golden calf. In the same way the children of Israel shall be numbered in the end of days; but no mortal will know the sum, for then all their souls will be redeemed, and God alone will be able to number them, as it is written: *They shall be more numerous than the sands of the sea and the stars of heaven.*

But when the Israelites had been numbered, Abiram the scoffer still scoffed, saying: "Now we cannot see God, to the number of six hundred thousand less three thousand."

Then the Eternal commanded Moses: "Put apart the lepers among the people." For, after the Lord had forgiven Israel the sin of the golden calf, the pestilence that kills had disappeared, but leprosy, that does not kill, had not disappeared.

Ten, says Rabbi Judah bar Shalom, are the causes of leprosy: pride and ambition, calumny and lying, theft, murder, and fornication, profanation of the divine Name, blasphemy, and idolatry; and this is why leprosy remained upon the body, as sin upon the soul, of Israel.

Moses therefore commanded that the lepers should be put outside the camp, and this ordinance was always a law in Israel. But when the lepers were divided from the Israelites, Abiram the scoffer ceased not his scoffing: "Now I can see no lepers; but I still cannot see God."

Then the Eternal said to Moses : " Now number the sons of Levi from one month old and upwards. And let every firstborn among the children of Israel bring to the sons of Levi five shekels for the redemption of the firstborn. For if the children of Israel had kept in their flesh the seal of My covenant in Egypt, and had not worshipped the golden calf in the wilderness, the firstborn of Israel would have kept My Sanctuary. And because the children of Levi, alone, kept upon their flesh the seal of My covenant, in Egypt, and, alone, did not, in the wilderness, worship the golden calf, they, alone, in the place of the firstborn of Israel, shall keep My Sanctuary. It is for this that each firstborn of Israel shall redeem himself from each son of Levi. Then thou shalt number separately each family in Levi by their names : the families of Kohath and of Gershon and of Merari ; for I will choose from among the sons of Levi the pure one who shall be the Priest among My priests, and shall purify before My face My people among the peoples."

Now Moses had trembled when he had been commanded not to number them of Levi, but to number them of Israel ; he was a son of Levi, and he thought in his heart : " Is there a blot upon the sons of Levi ? " But when he heard God set in his love them of Kohath above them of Gershon, who were the firstborn in the order of their birth, he rejoiced ; he was a son of Kohath, and he thought in his heart : " God will choose me from among them of Kohath, as Priest among His priests."

When he had numbered all the sons of Levi, family by family, they were twenty-two thousand and three hundred ; and all the firstborn of the tribes of Jacob brought them each five shekels for the redemption of the firstborn, for it was for five shekels that the sons of Jacob had sold their brother. Then the Elders of Israel laid their hands upon all them of Levi, making of each a firstborn of Israel. But

Abiram and the scoffers cried out upon him : " Can thy firstborn see God better than if they had never been born ?"

Then the Eternal commanded Moses : " Take from among them of Levi them who have come to years of understanding ; take them apart from the Israelites, near the Tabernacle ; and for seven days' space instruct them, according to the laws of My Torah, in the things My Torah expecteth of them." And for seven days Moses taught them.

He showed them the burnt offering and the peace offering ; the offering for the sin sinned wittingly, and the offering for the sin sinned in ignorance ; that of the Sabbath, and of each day, and of each month ; and of the Passover, which is in memory of the going up out of Egypt ; and of Shabuoth,[1] which is to recall the gift upon Sinai ; and the offering for Kippur,[2] which, with the Fast, is in memory of the Forgiveness ; and the offering of Succoth,[3] which, with the booths of branches, is because of the joy of Israel in the tents of the wilderness.

And in these sacrificial offerings, sheep or goats, lambs or bulls are offered up with the offerings of wine and oil and flour ; and these beasts are clean, and others unclean. Why, ask our Rabbis, sacrifice beasts ? Does God, who forbadeth us the blood of animals lest we become bloodthirsty, eat their flesh or drink their blood ? And why sacrifice, not the unclean, but the clean beasts ? It is because man may eat only of the clean beasts, and sacrifice to God only the clean beasts of which he may eat ; for God desires not food for Himself, but that man when he is fed shall feel himself fed by God. This is why, since the destruction of the Temple, the recital of the sacrifice has served as sacrifice.

[1] Shabuoth, the Feast of Weeks. [2] Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.
[3] Succoth, the Feast of Tabernacles.

Then he showed them the incense, made with the thirteen perfumes, come from the gardens of the earth and the isles of the sea to dissolve into the air at the touch of fire, which in its four forms gives back the creation to the Creator, and, rejoicing the heart of man, rejoiceth also the heart of God.

Then he taught them the eighteen benedictions, and all the prayers, and among the prayers, the most sacred of all prayers, the *Shema* : for, as it is written in the Zohar, when Israel proclaimeth in this world : *Hear, O Israel : the Lord is our God, the Lord is One*,[1] the Oneness of God is perfected in this world and in all the worlds.

Then he taught them the chanting of prayer, and this chanting must never stop, for when Israel, on earth, ceases from its chanting, the song of the angels On High ceases also.

Then Moses made all the Levites put on the four levitical vestments : the narrow breeches of fine twined linen that atone for concupiscence ; and the straight mitre of fine linen that atones for theft ; and the coat without fold or colour or blemish that atones for bloodshed. Then he took a single measure of oil to anoint them, and mingled it with myrrh and saffron and cinnamon and balm ; and such was the purity of that single measure of oil that for two thousand years it sufficed to sanctify all the Levites, all the Kings, and all the High Priests in Israel.

Then God said to Moses : " I know that in thine heart thou thinkest to be My High Priest. But because thou didst lift up thine hammer against Aaron, when thou imaginedst he had served the Idol, Aaron shall be My High Priest. And to show thine humility before all, proclaim before all that I have chosen him."

When Moses proclaimed the greatness of his brother before the people, according to God's will, Aaron trembled :

[1] In the Authorised Version of the Bible : *Hear, O Israel : the Lord thy God is One Lord.* Several renderings are possible, but that chosen is perhaps nearest the Jewish conception.—*Trans.*

the horns of the altar reminded him of the horns of the golden calf, and, however sure his innocence, he did not feel sure that he was innocent.

He said : " How can it be, Moses, that thou hast had all the travail, and I shall have all the reward ? " Moses answered : " My travail was thine ; thy reward shall be mine." Thus, say our Rabbis, Aaron and Moses were for Israel like the two twin breasts of a woman ; the two breasts make the beauty of a woman, and Aaron and Moses made the beauty of Israel ; the two breasts nourish the child with milk, Moses and Aaron nourished Israel with love.

But Abiram cried : " I see a doubled Moses, I do not see God." And the scoffers laughed with him. The Prophet, without attention to them, said before the assembly : " Blessed be Aaron, whom the Lord hath chosen for His High Priest ! " And he taught him the divination of the stones whereon are the twelve names of the tribes, whose twelve gleaming lights reveal Israel's future ; and he taught him the laying of hands upon the scapegoat, that bears away into the wilderness Israel's past.

Then, giving to his brother, who was already clad in the four vestments of the Levite, the four vestments of the High Priest, he said to him : " Gird on the blue coat bordered with bells, that atones for calumny ; gird on the ephod of cloth of gold, that atones for idolatry ; gird on the double breastplate, that atones for forfaulture ; gird on the triple crown, that atones for blasphemy. Behold, God hath clothed thee like an angel ; for when, with thine heart sanctified beneath thy sanctified vestments, and by the righteousness of the Patriarchs sanctifying Israel and the world, thou shalt enter the Holy of Holies, where are the angels, He desireth that thou shalt be like an angel. And now, by this oil with which I anoint thine head and the heads of thy sons, I pour out the gifts of the priestly power for the ages that shall follow after the ages, upon thee and

upon thy sons, and upon thy sons' sons." Then, turning toward the congregation, he said to them : "Be pure even as God is pure ; He will dwell among you, if that He find in your pure hearts a Tabernacle." But Abiram cried : "I had my heart before, so why thy Tabernacle ? "

And now the day approached upon which God designed to make His Presence manifest and lasting. The Princes of the tribes brought to the completed Sanctuary the gifts that had been too late for the Sanctuary's beginning. Together they offered six covered wagons of brass and twelve oxen without blemish, for the carrying of the holy Dwelling-place, and for the feasts of the dedication each offered a spoon of ten shekels in gold, filled with incense, a silver charger of a hundred and thirty shekels' weight, a silver bowl of seventy shekels, filled with flour kneaded in oil for the oblation, a bullock, a lamb, and a ram of the first year for the burnt offering, a kid for the sin offering, and for the peace offering two bulls, five rams, five goats, and five yearling lambs. The Prophet, after consulting God, accepted them, and all in Israel and all in Levi walked in procession to the Tabernacle behind Moses and Aaron, with Nadab and Abihu and Eleazar and Ithamar the sons of Aaron, to see the Splendour of the Lord come down before the face of the multitude.

This day, the first of the month of Nisan, was crowned with ten crowns : it was the first of the week, the first of the month, the first of the year ; the first day on which the Princes of the tribes brought their offerings, and the first whereon the Levites went in to sing their songs, and sacrifice, and eat their part of the burnt offering ; for the first time the altar would light up with fire, Aaron would bless Israel, and the Tabernacle would be blessed with the Glory of the Lord.

And on that day the happiest among all women was

Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab ; for her brother Nahshon was Prince of his tribe, her brother-in-law Moses was the Prophet, her sons, Eleazar, Ithamar, Nadab, and Abihu were chief of the priests, and Aaron, her spouse, High Priest. But days, like kings, lose their crowns.

" Mend thy ways on the eve of thy death," Rabbi Eleazar used to say. " But," his disciple answered him, " can I tell on what day I shall die ? " " True ; thou dost not know it : wherefore, mend thy ways each day." But Nadab and Abihu had in no wise mended their ways ; and they knew not that they were about to die ; and their mother knew not that they were about to die.

Ceaselessly they chanted in their pride : " The brother of our mother is Prince of his tribe ; the brother of our father is the Prophet ; we are chiefs of the priests, and our father, High Priest. What daughter of Israel could be meet for us ? " And as they walked in the procession behind Moses and Aaron, Abihu said to Nadab : " When shall we be chief in Israel ? " And Nadab replied : " When these two old men shall die." The Holy One, blessèd be He, who seeks the offering of the pure in heart, had heard them. But, according to our Rabbis, His Mercy, which forgiveth, breatheth in every hour of the day ; and His Justice, which chastiseth, breatheth only in a thousandth part of a thousandth part of a second each day. So that this time yet again He forgave.

And now all Israel was assembled before the altar set before the Sanctuary ; and by a miracle of God this space, measuring six seahs, easily contained sixty myriads of grown men, and as many youths. And thus also when the Lord shall appear for the Last Judgment, all the dead shall rise, from Adam to his last posterity ; and Zion, without increasing in space, shall be vast enough to hold their whole multitude.

The wood was set upon the altar ; upon the wood the victim ; and this victim was a bullock, to atone for the sin of the golden calf. Aaron, turning toward the congregation, pronounced the blessing of the High Priest upon them : " The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." And all awaited the Presence of the Lord, but It came not.

Then Aaron entered into the Sanctuary to pray ; but, though he prayed, God was still absent. And Aaron thought in his heart : " Why is not Moses the High Priest ? The Holy One, blessèd be He, is angry with me. My sin hideth from Him His servant, who should hide from Him the sin of Israel." As he was praying Moses rejoined him in the Tabernacle, and together they entered into the Holy of Holies. And while their united prayers rose up to the Cherubim, the eyes and the mouths of the Cherubim united, and, before the multitude, a fire from God fell upon the altar, and a flame rose up and consumed the offering, and a smoke rose up bearing it to heaven. And of such kind was this fire that it burned for centuries without melting or tarnishing the brass of the altar ; and of such kind was the smoke that it smoked for centuries, rising as straight in all winds as if it had been granite.

When all the people saw the thing, they felt the Presence of God among them, and fell on their faces, and sang to the Lord. And the Lord also was joyful, for (says Rabbi Samuel bar Abba) the Holy One, blessèd be He, desireth to dwell on earth : the sin of Adam had banished Him out of it ; by the grace of Moses He inhabited it again. His Creation, till then unfirm, at last rested as on a fast-set tripod, upon its three golden pedestals—Love, Law, and Sacrifice.

But while all Israel was now but one cleansed heart before God, Nadab and Abihu, without having purified

their flesh in the ritual bath, nor having put sanctified fire in their censers, their heads and their hearts full of the strong wine of their pride, had followed Moses and Aaron into the Sanctuary ; and when they had found them praying in the Holy of Holies, Nadab said to Abihu : " When shall we be chief in Israel ? " And Abihu answered him : " When shall these two old men die ? " And it was the moment of the second when Justice breathes : it hurled forth their punishment. The two Chérubim divided their mouths ; their two faces turned away from one another. The eyes of one of them flashed two lightnings, and from each lightning came forth two lightnings, long and fine as two threads of gold : the four lightnings entered, invisible, into the four nostrils of the two sinners, and without a sound, without a cry, in their unscathed bodies, their souls were consumed.

Sore lamented Elisheba ! Mute utterly was Aaron ! He took no part in their funeral rites : sight of the dead is a defilement to the High Priest, whose spirit must turn toward the Only Living. But great was the grief of his heart, and in his heart he reproached himself because of his grief, thinking : " All the Princes of the tribes have offered to God an offering, according to his wish. Levi alone hath offered naught, and I am Prince of Levi. Hath my grief turned me then aside from the Lord, and made me unfit to offer Him aught ? " Then Moses said to him : " Light the lamps of the Candlestick. Thou shalt offer to God the light of the Sanctuary."

Why, ask our Rabbis, did the Holy One, blessèd be He, desire that the light should be lighted up before Him ? It is like that man who had his sight who had journeyed with a blind man, and guided him all along the road. In the evening, when they came to their resting-place, he said to the blind man : " Light the torch for me." Had he need

of the blind man to see? In no wise. But he did not wish that any one should be able to say that he had done everything for the blind man, and that for him the blind man had done nothing. God is the Man with sight, Israel the blind; and God desires that the peoples shall say of Israel: "Behold! Israel lighteth the Lord." For if the peoples had known what salvation to the world the Tabernacle would be, they would themselves have built the Tabernacle, and if they had known what salvation to the world would be the light of the Tabernacle, they would themselves have lighted its light.

And when Aaron had lighted the lamps, the golden Candlestick lighted the world; and beneath the serene sky, for Aaron's sake showing His Presence to the world, the Glory of the Lord came down to inhabit, in a cloud of glory, the Glory of the Sanctuary.

CHAPTER XV

MOSES, OUR MASTER

From the day when the Presence of God came to dwell in the Tabernacle, the word of the Lord came to the Prophet in a new form. Until then the Holy One, blessèd be He, had spoken to him as through a vast trumpet ; and Moses' face could be seen to redden when he heard it. Now the voice of the Eternal was with him so gently, so constantly and intimately, that, not only could it not be heard either by men or by angels, it was no longer revealed by any troubling of the Prophet's face. And this voice murmured to him :

" Formerly there was enmity between Me and My children, and anger and hate. Now there is friendship, and peace, and love." And the Prophet answered : " King of the World, since now there is union between Thee and Thy people, since Thy Presence in the cloud of glory repulses from them the evil spirits of demons and the evil eye of the nations, since I have built for them Thy Tabernacle, and for them set Thy Torah in Thy Tabernacle, is not my task completed ? " " No, my son. What is My love for My people, if My people know not how to preserve it ? What is My Torah for My people, if they know not how to practise it ? Since thou hast set for them My Torah in My Tabernacle, now teach them My Torah ; and let them practise it and preserve My love." And from that day forth Moses, our master, taught the Torah to the children of Israel.

This, according to our Rabbis, is how he taught it : Aaron came first to receive the word of God ; then the two sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, who received it in their turn, while Aaron listened, seated upon the right hand of Moses ; then the Prophet instructed the Elders, while Eleazar listened seated on his father's right, and Ithamar, seated on Moses' left ; finally they of the people came up to be instructed equally with the High Priest. When Moses had ended, he withdrew. Then Aaron repeated what he had learned ; then Eleazar and Ithamar his sons ; then all the others, until every man, from the first to the last, had said over his lesson four times : for the Eternal commanded Moses to implant His Torah four times in the children of Israel.

He said to them what our Sages have since repeated : " The study of the Torah is worth more than sacrificial offerings and more than incense. When three men eating at the same table do not speak of the Torah, it is as though they ate of a meat offered up to an idol ; but when three men eating at the same table speak to one another of the Torah, it is as though they ate at the Lord's table. Therefore seek ye out the Torah, for it will not come to seek you ; and if ye seek it not in your youth, how shall ye find it in your age ? But when ye shall have found it, ascribe not any merit unto yourselves, for God hath created you for the Torah."

And he said to them again : " Behold the ten commandments written on the two tables that I received from the Eternal ; they make but one commandment, for each of them, on one of the tables, answereth one of the others, upon the other table. The first, that saith, *I am the Lord thy God*, faceth the sixth, *Thou shalt not kill*, for the murderer destroyeth God's image ; the second, *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*, faceth the seventh, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*, for idolatry is one infidelity, and adultery is

another no less sinful. The third, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*, faceth the eighth, *Thou shalt not steal*, for blasphemy is a theft from God, and theft leadeth to blasphemy. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour*, faceth *Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy*, for he who breaketh the Sabbath, forgetting that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested the seventh day, is a false witness against the Lord. *Honour thy father and thy mother* faceth *Thou shalt not covet*, for he who coveteth that which he hath not, rejoiceth not in that which he hath, and honoureth not them who have given it unto him. And such is the union between these commandments that he who breaketh the last breaketh them all, for he that coveteth, coveteth other gods and other parents, and rebelleth against God, and worshippeth other gods, and sanctifieth not any day, and beareth witness against himself, and in his thought stealeth and killeth, and in his heart committeth adultery."

Thus Moses explained to them the laws they had already received; then he taught them those they did not yet know:

Thou shalt break down the house, when the leprosy spreadeth within it. . . .

Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk. . . .

Thou shalt not lend on usury to thy brother. . . .

Thou shalt restore his pledge to the poor man at sunset, that he may sleep in his garment. . . .

If a man smite the eye of his servant, he shall let him go free, for his eye's sake. . . .

If an Hebrew, thy brother, be sold unto thee, he shalt serve thee six years, and in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free, and with gifts: for thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee. . . .

Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together. . . .

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. . . .

When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleaning of thy harvest ; thou shalt leave them for the poor, and for the stranger, for the widow and the orphan : for the Lord thy God upholdeth the orphan and the widow, and loveth the stranger ; wherefore thou shalt love the stranger ; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Sometimes they who listened to Moses questioned him.

Jethro the proselyte said to him : " Moses, our master, it is written in thy Torah : *I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation* ; and it is written in thy Torah : *The children shall not be put to death for the fathers : no man shall be put to death save for his own sin.* Are there then two laws in thy Law ? " And Moses answered him : " It is written : *I visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*, for God desireth that the father shall draw back from the sin with which men would reproach his children ; and it is written : *No man shall be put to death save for his own sin*, for God desireth not that the innocent pay for the guilty."

Joshua the disciple said to him : " Moses, our master, it is written in thy Torah : *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* ; and it is written in thy Torah : *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.* Is it love of thy neighbour to demand of him his eye or his tooth ? " Moses answered him : " It is written : *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, for the Name of the Lord is Love. And it is written : *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*, for it is against love to let the wicked go free, and the wicked must expiate his fault to deserve love."

And Korah the rich asked Moses : " Moses, our master, it is written in thy Torah : *Take not from the poor, for he is poor.* Who can take from the poor, since he hath nothing ? "

And Moses answered him : " That which thou shouldst give to the poor belongeth unto him ; that which thou givest him not, that thou takest from him."

And while Moses at the foot of Sinai thus taught the Torah to the children of Israel, in the School of Heaven Zagzagel taught it to the angels, and in the Garden of Eden the Holy One, blessèd be He, taught it to the righteous, who are above the angels. And the righteous in their turn questioned the Holy One, blessèd be He. Abraham said to Him : " King of the World, Thou hast written in Thy Torah : *In the beginning God created heaven and earth.* Was there then already a beginning, when Thou createdst the world ? And what didst Thou, in this beginning ? " And, according to Rabbi Abbahu, God answered : " Before the world that now is, I created other worlds, and because they pleased me not I destroyed them."

Jacob asked the Eternal : " King of the World, Thou hast written in Thy Torah : *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath* ; since Thou reprovest the idolater, why dost Thou not destroy that which he worshippeth ? " And God answered him, according to Rabban Gambiel : " They worship the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the waters. Ought I to destroy the world because they cannot understand Me ? "

And Isaac asked the Eternal : " King of the World, when Thou didst make the light, Thou didst say in Thy Torah that the light was good ; when Thou didst make the extent of the firmament and the extent of the earth, Thou didst say in Thy Torah that they were good ; and every herb Thou hast made, and every beast, Thou hast said that they are good ; but when Thou hadst made man in Thine image, Thou didst not say in Thy Torah that man was good. Wherefore, Lord ? " And God answered him : " Because

Man I have not yet perfected, and because through the Torah man is to perfect himself, and to perfect the world."

But, our Sages have said, to study the Torah without practising it is equivalent to not knowing God. Wherefore Moses, in order to practise it and to have it practised, judged the Israelites according to the Torah. All brought their lawsuits to him, standing around him all day long ; and he, dressed exactly like the others and without any sign to distinguish him from any of them, seated upon his bench, listened to them and judged them, interpreting and applying the Law—condemning sometimes, conciliating often.

But the people of Israel is a disputatious people ; to gain one shekel they will expend seventy. Was a litigant about to lose his cause ? He announced new evidence, new witnesses, and from week to week and from month to month he insisted upon adjournments. Did he lose ? He accused Moses of twisting the Law and of furnishing himself with arguments in the purse of his adversary. Sometimes the Prophet chided them : " Ye stiff-necked people ! When will ye be content ? How am I to bless you ? How am I to support you ? Let the Lord support you, let the Lord bless you ! " But they answered : " He hath sworn that He will multiply us like the sands of the sea and the stars of heaven ; we have no need of thy benediction ; thy probity would suffice us." For, our Doctors comment, as the cock among flying things or the dog among quadrupeds, so is the Israelite impudent among the nations ; and out of ten parts of effrontery that God has apportioned to the world, Israel for itself has taken nine.

And thus Moses was surrounded with quarrelling and cries from morning to evening. Seeing this, Jethro the proselyte said to him : " Moses, our master, if thou continuest like this thou wilt not go far. May it please thee to

listen to my advice and to follow it, if God approve it. Be thou the interpreter of the revelation : repeat to the children of Israel the word that thou receivest from the Eternal ; teach them to sacrifice, to praise, to keep the Sabbath and the feasts, to sanctify their marriages, to educate their children, to care for the sick, to bury the dead, to practise justice, and sometimes to renounce justice in favour of love. But to judge them, choose from amongst them men of good renown, whom thou shalt instruct and in whom shall be wisdom, fear of the Lord, modesty, hatred of pretence, and love of mankind and of truth. These men shall be judges over Israel, and thou shalt be judge over these men and let peace reign between the people and the judges, and between the judges and thyself."

This counsel was pleasing in the eyes of the Prophet, and it was pleasing to the Lord ; for God, wishing this thing to be done, wished that it should be done by the counsel of Jethro, in order that in him the proselyte should be honoured, and that the proselyte should have honour in the Torah. And this is why the Prophet, who could have hidden from posterity Jethro's part, in his modesty added a chapter to the Torah, telling of the counsel of the proselyte and proclaiming his wisdom.

Moses therefore, having assembled the children of Israel, said to them : " Choose from among you men to judge you, and, from among these men, I will choose you judges." They delayed not to obey him, for each of them thought in his heart : " Moses will name myriads of judges—judges of tens, judges of hundreds, judges of thousands. If I am not one of them, my son may be, or my grandson, or the son of my brother, or the husband of my sister, or the brother of the husband of my sister, or my friend, or his friend, or the friend of the friend of his

friend. And when he is judge, a small present will incline his justice to my side."

Moses was well aware of their thought, and knew that an evil judge makes the balance of the whole world incline towards evil, and that a good judge is as precious as the sum of all other good things. But not being able to find perfect ones, he chose the best amongst the least evil, and said to them : " Blessèd be ye who are judged meet to judge the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom God Himself hath called His children. Behold the High Priest, how he goeth up to the altar, with short steps ; go up in like manner with short steps toward justice, for if justice be not prudent it is not just. If a rich man and a poor come before you, and right is on the side of the poor, ye shall not say : ' Wherefore should I humble the rich, who humbleth the poor ? ' But if the right is on the side of the rich ye shall not say : ' The poor man hath nothing, why should I impoverish the poor ? ' If a strong man and a weak come before you, and right is on the side of the weak, ye shall not say : ' Why should I get myself killed by the strong ? ' But if the right is on the side of the strong, ye shall not say : ' Why should I let the strong kill the weak ? ' For as the palm giveth the date and the thorn, so the judge giveth absolution and punishment ; but if he know not how to punish, he knoweth not how to absolve, and if he know not how to punish nor how to absolve, in no wise doth he shelter the world beneath the shade of peace." And they went out and they judged Israel.

Now for more than a year Jethro the proselyte had dwelt beside Moses in the desert, learning from him the love of the Torah and the goodness of the Lord.

He said to the Prophet : " Moses, our master, let me return into Midian, which is my land and the land of my fathers." But Moses did not wish to let him go, for,

according to Rabbi Meir, the idolater who learns the Torah is greater than Aaron the High Priest. He answered him : " Jethro, my master, why dost thou not remain among us ? True it is that thou shalt have no part in the land that shall be given to us, for God desireth not that the proselyte, when he cometh to Him, should seem to seek other recompense than to have found Him. But thy sons, and the sons of thy sons shall be like our sons and the sons of our sons. If thou shouldst leave us now, what would the Nations say ? That Israel dismisseth the father of its Prophet because he is but a stranger ; that Israel keepeth its God for itself alone, and that its God wisheth to be the God of a single people. Remain then, thou who enlightenest him whom God enlighteneth. And with me thou shalt teach the Torah to the children of Israel."

But Jethro the proselyte answered : " A candle-end can give light in the night, but can it enlighten beside the sun ? Thou art the sun that enlighteneth Israel ; let me bear the light of Israel into the night of the nations."

And, while Jethro the proselyte went amidst the nations spreading with the love of his heart the Torah of Moses, our master, in the School On High, Zagzagel taught the Torah to the angels ; and in the Garden of Eden the Holy One, blessèd be He, taught it to the Righteous, who are above the angels.

And the Messiah, listening to the Torah, cried to the Holy One, blessèd be He : " When shall My turn come, Lord ? When shall I go down upon earth ? " And God answered Him : " When all the peoples shall proclaim : ' We know, we practise the Torah of Moses, our master,' Thy turn shall have come ; then, bearing in Thy heart, like David in his, the blood of Ruth the proselyte, Thou shalt go down ; and, as the waters of the sea fill the ocean, so the love of the Lord shall fill the whole earth."

CHAPTER XVI

THE WAY OF TRIALS

As the armies of the angels had been ranged about the Throne of Glory in the vision upon Sinai, so Moses had ranged about the Tabernacle the tents of the Levites and of the twelve tribes in the camp in the wilderness.

Behind the Throne of Splendour, he had seen the archangel Raphael, with his armies and his standard, in the regions of the north and of darkness : to the north of the Tabernacle he placed the children of Merari, who bear the beams and planks of the Sanctuary, and its pillars and sockets that are dark as night ; and to the north of the sons of Merari, with the banner of onyx and beryl and jasper, he placed the tribes of Asher and Naphtali, obscured by sin, and Dan, blackened by idolatry.

Before the Throne On High, Moses had seen the archangel Gabriel with his standard and his armies in the regions of the south, where are the beneficent dews and sustaining rains : to the south of the Tabernacle he placed the children of Kohath, bearing the Ark whence rain the benedictions of the Torah ; and to the south of the sons of Kohath, with the banner of sardonyx and emerald and topaz, the tribes of Gad and Simeon and Reuben, whence raineth repentence.

On the left of the Throne was the archangel Uriel, with his standard and his armies, in the regions of the west, where are hail and tempest : to the west of the Tabernacle he placed the children of Gershon, who shelter in the service of the Sanctuary ; and with the banner of agate, of chrysolite

and of amethyst the tribes of Benjamin, of Manasseh, and of Ephraim, strong ramparts against stormy Amalek.

On the right of the Throne was the archangel Michael with his standards and his armies, in the regions of the east, whence cometh the light. To the east of the Tabernacle God placed Aaron and Moses, for from the Priest and the Prophet cometh light upon Israel ; and to the east of Aaron and his sons and Moses, with the banner of ruby and carbuncle and sapphire, Zebulun, resplendent in abundance, Issachar, radiant with knowledge, and Judah, illumined by his royalty.

Through Moses' virtue manna descended upon the twelve regions of the camp from the twelve regions of the sky ; through Miriam's virtue the twelve rivers welling from her spring divided into twelve gardens the twelve encampments in the desert ; through Aaron's virtue the cloud of glory, rising above the Tabernacle, raised over Israel twelve airy canopies which the twelve jewels, scintillating on the breastplate of the High Priest, irradiated with onyx and beryl and jasper, and sardonyx and emerald and topaz, and agate and chrysolite and amethyst, and ruby and carbuncle and sapphire.

Now in the second year after the going out from Egypt, in the twentieth day of the second month, the time having come when God desired that the Israelites should leave the wilderness of Sinai for the Land of Promise, the cloud of glory, giving the signal in the heights, began to move. Instantly Moses commanded the trumpets to be blown. The twelve tribes folded up their tents and gathered together their flocks, while Aaron and his sons took off the veil of the Holy of Holies to cover with it the holy Ark, and enveloped with blue the Candlestick and the table and the altar of gold ; then the sons of Gershon took off the cloth of the Tabernacle, its standard, and its entrance curtain, and

all the stuffs of its court, with the ropes and other gear ; then the sons of Merari took up the beams and traverses and pillars and joists, with their cords and their gear, and the treasures divided from the holy Dwelling were placed upon the six chariots of brass that are drawn by the twelve immortal oxen.

But when the sons of Kohath had to take hold with their hands of the handles of the Ark, that they were to bear, they dared not approach it ; knowing that the two Cherubim hurl invisible lightning upon those whose heart is not purified, they feared the death of Nadab and Abihu. When they had taken courage and put their shoulders beneath the heavy burden, they could not lift it ; the Ark weighed upon them more heavily than all the mountains of the world. Then Moses cried : " Rise up, Lord ; let Thine enemies be scattered and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee." Instantly the Ark, rising up, bore its bearers ; and their feet, naked above the ground, walked in the air.

And thus the Children of Israel went toward the Promised Land ; the cloud of glory that covered their heads came down to guide their steps on the way, filling up the valleys and levelling the heights ; and, to escort them, Miriam's twelve rivers glided through the desert like twelve gigantic liquid serpents.

The twelve Princes of the tribes bore a coffin by the side of the Ark. How could such a thing be possible, ask our Rabbis ? So holy was the Ark that its bearers, in order not to turn their backs on the divine Presence, walked backwards. Was it not defilement of this holiness to join it to a defiling coffin ? Nay, for in the Ark went the Torah, and in the coffin Joseph, who had walked according to the Torah.

But from Judah to Gad the nine tribes which went before the Ark hastened their course to put a distance between themselves and it ; and from Ephraim to Dan the three

tribes that followed it lagged behind so as to avoid coming up with it. For, like the schoolboy who, when his lesson is finished, runs away quickly, fearing to be recalled by his master, or returns slowly, wishing to delay the new lesson, the Israelites already fled the Torah in their hearts.

After three days the cloud rested ; but while the tribes made ready to set up their tents, and the Levites to raise up the Tabernacle, the Ark, bearing its bearers, whose feet walked in the air, did not cease to go forward. Then Moses said : " Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." And the feet of its bearers having come to rest upon the ground, the Ark, in its turn, came to rest there.

Now the camp had scarce been pitched when the murmuring began again : " Then we have not yet arrived ? How many years more shall we need ? Where, then, is this Land of Promise flowing with milk and honey ? Can we even be certain that it exists ? How good were the cucumbers of Egypt, and the melons and the onions and the meat, the meat of the flesh-pots ! What have we received in exchange ? Manna in the morning, manna in the evening, manna on the Sabbath, manna week in and week out ! "

" Wherefore complain ye ? " Caleb or Joshua would ask ; " it is the food of the angels." But Abiram the scoffer replied : " Are we angels ? Is that which is good for the health of angels good for the health of men ? Hast thou ever seen corn put into a mill to grind it and nothing come out below ? We swallow thy manna by our mouths, and it remaineth entirely in our bellies. Supposing our bellies were to burst ? Every people produceth excrement ; are we alone in the world not to ? " And all cried : " Meat, meat ! Surely God can give it to us, since He is in the midst of us."

But why, Rabbi Simeon ben Johai asks, did they clamour

thus for meat? Had they not with them their sheep and their oxen, whose flesh they could eat, after offering it to God? And did not the manna itself take in their mouths all the savours that their hearts could wish? Indeed yes; but it did not take the savours of forbidden meats, and it was the savours of forbidden meats that, in despite of the Torah, they desired to eat.

And why, asks Rabbi Tanhuma bar Rabbi Hanalai, did the Holy One, blessèd be He, allow to all nations all foods, and to Israel alone forbid almost all? The thing is like that doctor who had two patients: one was lost beyond hope, the other might recover. What did the doctor? To the parents of him who was to die he said: "Give him whatever he likes to eat." To the parents of him whom he hoped to save: "Give him this, do not give him that." And in the same way every nation must perish some day: why therefore deprive it of what pleases it? But the children of Israel, if they deny themselves for the Torah's sake, will live to the last day.

When he had heard the complaints of the Israelites, Moses complained before God: "Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favour in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Whence should I have flesh to give to them?" "Go, say unto them," answered the Lord: "'Ye shall have meat, ye shall have so much that ye shall vomit by the throat and the nostrils.'" The Prophet, seeing that God would not content the Israelites save to punish them, entreated Him, saying: "Why give way to them, Lord, and punish them afterward? Doth the man say to his ox: 'Here are thine oats: if thou takest them, I shall behead thee'? Let me rather plead with them." And he sought the Israelites, saying: "God hath given you manna that is the food of the angels; think ye that He cannot give

you meat, that is the food of beasts? He will grant your wish, but if He grant it, ye shall perish."

The best of them renounced their desire, and withdrew beneath their tents; but the others cried out: "God no longer heareth thee; no longer doth He grant thy desire; it is to thee that He refuseth what we ask of Him. Thou hast sworn that He could do all things for us, and thou hast no more power over Him."

Then a wind blew whose tempest was so great that it could have destroyed the world; and quails fell as thick as snow-flakes, concealing the eye of the sun and filling with night all the light between earth and heaven. And on the north and on the south of the camp, throughout an extent that would have needed seven days to cover, they stopped two cubits from the ground, so that the sinners should not have to bend down to take them. But all those that tasted of them died; wherefore this place was named Kibroth-Hattaavah, "The Groves of Lust." And Moses thought in his heart: "If it need such chastisement to teach them to nourish their bodies, what chastisement must there be to teach them to nourish their souls?"

He continued to teach them the Torah, while the judges judged them, but often, not knowing how to judge, the judges consulted the Prophet; and sometimes the Prophet had to give a severe judgment. But Aaron the High Priest, not having to punish, spread throughout Israel the gentleness of his soul. Did two neighbours quarrel? He went to each one and said to him: "Thy brother is in sadness; he striketh his breast and blameth himself and groaneth: 'How have I been able to offend my brother?'" Was a husband about to put away his wife? He hastened to the wife, saying: "For her who can keep the love of her spouse, the altar of itself lighteth up with joy." And to the husband he said: "Upon him who sendeth away the companion of

his youth, the altar of itself letteth fall tears." Thus Moses' brother, forestalling justice, made peace, and Moses thought in his heart : " Happy my brother, who doth not have to punish."

One day the judges brought before him two malefactors. One was Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, of the tribe of Manasseh. He had been found cutting down a tree on the Sabbath day. Now it is written in the Torah : *Who violateth the Sabbath shall die.* Moses sought excuses for him in his heart : " Perhaps he did not know that it was the Sabbath ? " But his companions had reminded him. " Perhaps he was cutting the wood for the altar of burnt offerings ? " But he had cut the wood to cook his food and to show to all his contempt for the Sabbath. And Moses asked himself : " Shall I bring death upon this man ? " The other was Jahir, the son of Shelomith of the tribe of Dan, whom Dathan had put away after she had conceived from the embrace of Maror, the Egyptian taskmaster. She had brought up her son as an Israelite, but the tribe of Dan had driven him out ; and Moses, judging according to the Law, had approved in his judgment the tribe of Dan. Then the rage of Jahir had been kindled against Moses and against God, and he had blasphemed the Name of the Lord. Now it is written in the Torah : *The blasphemer shall die.* Moses sought excuses for him in his heart ; but is there any excuse for blasphemy ? And the Prophet asked himself : " Shall I bring death upon this man ? "

In each case he consulted the Holy One, blessèd be He, who answered him : " Assemble the people, and let the sinners be stoned before the face of the multitude. " Punish them Thyself, Lord," Moses besought Him ; " as Thou Thyself didst punish idolatry and lust, Thyself punish blasphemy and the violation of the Sabbath ; but command not me to punish." Thus did the Prophet implore Him, and his soul trembled in his flesh, for, for the first time,

he must ordain death. But God replied : " I have entrusted to thee My Torah ; what will become of it if its guardian dare not guard it ? Wishest thou that I take it back from the world, and that, deprived of it through thy fault, the world remain unperfected ? "

And the two men were stoned. Then a clamour rose from the Israelites : " What have we done ? Why have we accepted the Torah ? It promised us joy, but it bringeth malediction. Take back thy Torah, Moses. Give it back to the Eternal, for it will kill us all. We desire a Torah to live, not to die."

And once more the Prophet groaned to God : " Lord, Lord, wherefore hast Thou laid the burden of this people upon me ? How can I bear it ? Deliver me from my task, Lord, or kill me." And God answered him : " How long, My son, wilt thou doubt thyself ; whom I choose is always strong enough. But since thine humility seeketh helpers, summon the Elders, and, without diminishing the spirit that I have put upon thee, I will put it upon them. And they shall be the Sanhedrin around thee to pronounce upon life or death, and to guide the judges and to guide Israel."

Then the Prophet assembled the Elders before the Tabernacle, and he laid his hands upon them, and, without losing anything of its force, his spirit descended upon them, like a flame that lights up other flames, and shines among them, keeping its own brilliance. But the flame of Moses shone more brightly than all ; and the Elders shone around him like seventy smaller flames.

Now when Moses had summoned the Elders to the Tabernacle, two amongst them, Eldad and Medad, thinking themselves unworthy, dared not enter. As a reward for their humility, the Holy One, blessèd be He, made the voice of prophecy speak in their souls. And

Eldad prophesied : " Moses, our master, shall die, and Joshua, the son of Nun, his disciple, shall succeed him, accomplishing his Promise." And Medad prophesied : " Israel shall die and Israel shall live again, and shall lead all the earth to the Land of Promise."

At these words Gershom, Moses' son, who was neither among the judges, nor among the priests, nor among the Elders, ran to the Prophet, crying : " Moses, our master, wilt thou suffer the Elders to prophesy ? They say that thou wilt die and that Israel will die ! " And Joshua, the son of Nun, also cried out : " Moses, Moses, our master, they say that the disciple and not the master will keep the promises of the master ! " And Moses replied to Joshua : " Joshua, my son, who art my disciple, thinkest thou that thy master envieth the glory of his disciple ? " And to Gershom he made reply : " Gershom, my son, who art not a prophet, wherefore should I silence my prophets ? Would God that all the sons of Israel were prophets ! "

That evening, to celebrate the light of God that had come upon the Elders, their wives lighted lights before their dwellings. Perceiving this, Zipporah, Moses' wife, asked : " Wherefore are these lights ? " Miriam replied to her : " The spirit of God hath descended upon the Elders, and their wives rejoice at it." " Why do they not rather weep," answered Zipporah ; " at least if the Elders imitate Moses, their master ; for since he hath known the spirit of God he hath known my flesh no more." And in truth, when the Lord, desiring to speak to the Israelites in the lightning of Sinai, had commanded Moses : " For two days let the Israelites keep apart from their wives," the Prophet had thought : " If, during two days, they are to keep apart from their wives to hear God but once only, ought not I to keep from mine always, I who hear him always ? " And he had never again held Zipporah in his arms.

Out of ten parts of gossip which have been portioned to the world, women, say our Rabbis, have taken nine for themselves ; therefore it is not surprising if prophetesses themselves are not exempt. As soon as Miriam had heard Zipporah's confidence, she hastened swift to Aaron her brother and told him of it, adding : " I too have received revelations from God ; yet I have not refused joy to my husband." Aaron said in his turn : " I also have received revelations from God, yet I have not refused myself to my wife." And both together concluded : " Our fathers also received revelations without denying the joys of the flesh. Doth Moses then think himself wiser than the Patriarchs ? Doth he wish to humiliate us and show that he is a saint ? It is his pride that he showeth, and his pride is a sin."

But God said to them : " Whom do ye judge, ye whom I judge ? I have uncovered before Moses all that is on earth below, all that is in heaven above, all that is before, all that is after. I have set him above Mine angels ; he hath beheld with his eyes My divine Presence. What he hath done, that I have wished. Ye slander the master by slandering the servant ; but ye shall know the punishment of slanderers."

Next day the children of Israel made ready to depart, to go up to the borders of the Promised Land. The tribes were folding up their tents. The Levites were taking apart the Tabernacle. Already the sacred pieces were upon the chariots, drawn by the immortal oxen, and the Ark had lifted up its bearers, and the cloud of glory was setting forth, when Aaron amd Miriam appeared before Moses, and, lo ! both were defiled with leprosy.

" My sister, my brother ! " cried the Prophet, " for what hath God punished you ? What have ye done, what have ye done, to deserve His anger? " " Pardon us, pardon us, Moses. Because thou knowest Zipporah no more, because thou art wholly near God, we said evil of thee. Our

thoughts have defiled the purity of thine ; and God hath put upon us impurity and defilement. Heal us ! save us ! Against thee we have sinned, and thou alone canst take away our sin ! "

Long was Moses silent. Troubled by heavy grief, he thought : " My brother is against me too ; my sister, too, is against me ! " And he shut his eyelids to keep back his tears.

At last he re-opened his eyes and slowly let them rest upon Aaron ; and as soon as he had looked upon him the leprosy fell from his body. Then he looked upon Miriam, but the more he looked upon her the more the defilement of leprosy thickened upon her flesh. And Aaron cried : " Wilt thou cast our sister out of the camp ? She who watched over thee on the bank of the river in Egypt ? Who sang with thee the Song of the Divided Waters ? Who taught to the women the Torah of the Lord ? Shall we enter the Land of Promise, and Miriam not be with us ? "

What did the Prophet then ? If he had prayed long, some would have said : " There is no end to his prayer, while there is no end to his sister's suffering." And others would have said : " For his sister his prayers are long ; for us they are short ! " This is why, according to our Rabbis, the Prophet prayed for a moment only. Then he took his rod and traced a circle about himself on the ground. Then he said to God : " So long as Thou shalt not have removed the leprosy from Miriam, my sister, I will not go out from this circle ! " And God answered him : " If a king or if her father had spat in her face, she would bear her shame for seven days ; since I, the King of Kings, the Father of Fathers, have spat in her face, she should bear it for at least twice seven days. For thy sake, My son, I will remit to her the half of it. For one week let her be put out of the camp : at the end of the week I will cleanse her."

And in memory of the seven hours when Miriam had

waited on the bank of the river till Moses should be saved from the waters, the tribes of Israel, with their tents and their flocks, the sons of Gershon and Merari, with the Tabernacle and the chariots, and the sons of Kohath, with the sacred Ark, and the cloud of glory itself, with the twelve jewels of the twelve splendours, for seven days waited until Miriam should be saved from the leprosy, and should give back to the Israelites with her renewed cleanness the cleanness of the twelve rivers sprung from her well.

But while the cloud and the Ark and the Levites, and the tribes and the chariots and the flocks, and the twelve rivers of the twelve fragrances, went forward again through the wilderness, Moses, who walked between Miriam and Aaron, thought in his heart : " Lord, Lord, how shall I be able to lead this people, if I am slandered in the ears of this people by Aaron, my brother, who is its High Priest, and by Miriam, my sister, who is its Prophetess ? "

CHAPTER XVII

THE FRUIT OF THE LAND

When they had come to the wilderness of Paran on the borders of the Promised Land, the Prophet said to them : " Behold the land is before you, take possession of it ; but think well that if God taketh it away from the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hittites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, it is in no wise because of your virtues, but because of their sins ; for they prostitute their flesh before the face of their idols upon every verdant mountain, and in the hollows of the valleys they give their firstborn to the flames. And if God giveth to you what He taketh back from them, it is in no wise for your sakes, but for the sakes of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, your fathers, who have found grace in His sight."

To what can the thing be compared, asks Rabbi Aha the Great ? To that king who had said to his friend : " Come with me, I will give thee a present." The friend accompanied him, but died on the way. What did the king ? He said to the son of his friend : " Thy father is dead, but my promise liveth still. Receive for thy father the present that I promised." In the same way, God said to the children of Israel : " The land that I promised to your fathers, behold I give it to you ! " For the word of the Lord liveth for ever.

But Korah, Pharaoh's former treasurer, replied to Moses : " Do we know this land ? Do we know whether it will suit us ? Shall we risk its invasion before exploring it ? " And the young pushing on the old, the old pushing on the young, all pell-mell, cried out after Korah : "We will not

be deceived again. Let us first know whither we are going. Send men who shall inform us ! " " Hath not the Lord informed you," Moses retorted, " hath He not said to you : ' I lead you into a land of wheat and of barley, of grapes and of figs, of pomegranates and of olives, of milk and of honey, into a land over which the Lord watcheth, and which is continually beneath His eye ' ? Did ye send spies into the wilderness when I brought you up out of the land of Egypt ? And now that I bring you out of the wilderness, do ye wish to confirm the testimony of God ? " " No ; not His testimony, but thine, that testifieth for Him," replied Korah. " The greater the enterprise the greater should be one's prudence ! I am no dreamer, I am a practical man." And the young pushing on the old, and the old pushing on the young, all pell-mell, cried after him : " Let us be prudent, let us be prudent ! This is a practical matter ! "

Moses therefore chose twelve men, one for each tribe, and commanded them : " Go, explore the land. Go not upon the highroad ; but neither go by hidden pathways like robbers ; worship not the idols, but neither say that ye will come to overthow them. Look upon the land : if it is firm it is fat ; if it is soft it is thin. Look upon the towns : if they are open their inhabitants are strong ; if they are shut within walls they are cowards. Ye shall enter by the south, and go up the valley, and come down by the plain."

Why, ask our Rabbis, did he make them enter by the south ? It is because in the south are the poorest places in Canaan, and the poorest places in Canaan are richer than the richest in Egypt. Like the merchant who first shows his less beautiful stuffs, in order afterwards to spread out ones more beautiful and then yet more beautiful, he wished to lead them from splendour to marvel, so that their return should make each and all marvel.

On the twenty-second day of the month of Sivan they

went out from Kadesh-Barnea, which is in the wilderness of Paran : Shammua for the tribe of Reuben ; Shaphat for the tribe of Simeon ; Igal for that of Issachar ; Palti, Gaddiel, and Gaddi for Benjamin, Zebulon, and Manasseh; Ammiel, Geuel, Sethur, Nahbi, for Dan, Gad, Asher, and Naphtali.

Our Doctors have said : " There are beautiful names that are borne by men whose actions are beautiful, and beautiful names borne by men whose actions are ugly. And there are ugly names borne by men whose actions are beautiful. But these bore names that were ugly, and their actions were ugly, for their names contained shadow, imposture, blasphemy, and the spirit of evil, and, without learning from the leprosy that had punished Miriam, their mouths slandered the gifts of the Lord. Only Caleb from Judah and Joshua from Ephraim were beautiful in their names and in their actions. For Caleb signifieth : *Like unto the heart*, and he spake according to his heart ; and Joshua signifieth : *Saviour*, and he saved Israel.

On the twenty-second day of the month of Sivan they went forth, and on the eighth day of the month of Ab they came back. But how, ask our Sages, could they in forty days journey through the whole extent of the land of Israel ? It was because, in its joy at being trodden by the children of Israel, the land, shortening its ways, ran to meet them !

How great was the joy in the camp when they returned ! The first two bore upon their shoulders two staves whence hung a huge bunch of grapes. Now when a man loads his own shoulders he can bear a weight of one seah ; when another loads him he can bear two ; think, then, of the weight of this bunch carried upon two staves by two men that four men had loaded ! All, seeing it, cried out : " How good is the land that the Lord giveth us ! " But when the

spies, followed by the multitude, had come before Moses, joy ceased.

Man, say our Masters, has six organs to serve him. Three serve him as they wish, three serve him as he wishes ; his eye does not choose to see, nor his ear to hear, nor his nose to smell ; but his foot walks at his will, his hand takes hold at his will, and at his will his mouth utters lies or truths. Now these lied.

According to the custom of slanderers, Shaphat began by praising : " We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it is good to look upon. Behold the bunch of grapes that we have brought back : and olives, figs, pomegranates are in the same measure. Honey flows from the trees, fat from the fields, milk from the byres. . . ." " But . . . " said Palti. " But," said Gaddiel, " it is a land without a Nile. It must be watered, and to water it there must be water from the sky." " What shall we do if it rain not ? " asked Korah. " We shall wait for the rain," said Abiram. " Then," others said, " no more grapes, no more pomegranates, no more figs, no more olives, no more fat, no more milk, no more honey ? And it is for this land that Egypt has been taken from us ? " " Then," continued Gaddi, " pestilence is everywhere." " Pestilence ? " " It is a land that devoureth its inhabitants. In each city we entered we saw but burials." " Pestilence ? Pestilence ? Pestilence upon Moses ! "

Then Joshua rose up and cried : " Believe them not, they lie because they are afraid ! " " Yea," said Shammua, " we were afraid." " Yea," said Gaddiel, " we were afraid. Ye also would have been afraid." " Of whom ? " " Of the three sons of Anak : Ahiman, Sheshai, Talmai ! . . . They are giants ! They are descended from the angels who coupled with the daughters of men after the Flood. They die but by halves. When half their body is dead, the other half doubles itself and replaces it. . . . Their legs are higher

than the mountains. Their arms are longer than the rivers ; their heads rise up to heaven. . . . All twelve of us were hidden in a cave, and this cave was but a hole pierced by the sting of a bee in the skin of a pomegranate that their daughter was eating ! And when she had eaten, she threw all twelve of us, with the cave, into the grass of her garden ! " " And," continued Gaddi, " the sons of Anak are but three, but there are also the sons of Amalek, who are without number ! Esau their ancestor, the enemy of old, has posted them on the frontier to bar our passage." And all cried : " The sons of Amalek, the sons of Amalek ! " —for Amalek to the Israelites is like the whip to the child : when Amalek is spoken of they remember the whip. " God hateth us, God hateth us ! " they howled. He taketh Egypt from us and then giveth us Amalek ! "

" Have I not already led you against Amalek ? " cried Joshua. " He ran before you as the wind over the plain." " What ! Joshua dare speak ? Shut his mouth ! . . . He is a man of war, and he desireth war ! . . . What are our sons to thee ? Thou hast no sons. . . . He who hath no sons is not a man. He who hath no sons is an assassin."

Then Caleb rose up. Beside his voice thunder was silence ; the giants, when they had heard it, had fled. He cried : " Listen not unto them ! Terror is beneath their tongue. They lie ! . . . I had to prick them with my sword to make them bring you this bunch of grapes ! Listen to me ! Listen to me ! I went up to Machpelah into the cave where sleep the Patriarchs. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rose up from their tomb. They told me that they await you. I sware to them that ye would come. Are they not stronger than Amalek ? And is not God stronger than the Patriarchs ? To deliver to you the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hittite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite He hath cast out from their land their guardian angels ! We were as grasshoppers before the giants ; He made us in their eyes

greater than giants. Speak to them, Moses, speak to them ! "

But Moses was silent. Shrouded in sackcloth, with ashes upon their heads, the ten slanderers went throughout the camp ; they cried aloud : " Woe to our daughters, who shall be defiled by Amalek ! Woe to our sons, who shall be butchered by Amalek ! The towns that we saw have walls larger than the night ; the men that we saw have in the foreheads two suns for eyes ! " And the children of Israel howled after them : " Woe ! Woe ! Abiram, Dathan, be ye our chieftains ! Lead us, lead us back into Egypt ! " And the young pushing on the old, and the old pushing on the young, pell-mell, they surrounded Moses, Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, and, gathering stones, they stoned them ; and like the hailstones of the hail the stones fell upon them.

Then, beholding the redness of blood upon the foreheads of the righteous, the cloud of glory descended from above the Tabernacle and came down to cloak them in a mantle of onyx and beryl and jasper and sardonyx and emerald and topaz and chrysolite and amethyst and ruby and carbuncle and sapphire ; but the Israelites howled on, and, stoning the cloud, stoned God.

All night beneath the roof-skins of their tents, crouching in the dust, grinding their teeth, clawing their cheeks, tearing out their beards, hammering the ground with their foreheads, the sixty myriads of Israel made lamentation ; and the trembling of their terror rent heaven with the six hundred thousand rendings of their cry.

Then God said to them : " Ye weep without reason. I will give you two reasons for weeping." It was the ninth night of the month of Ab ; in that night the Lord decreed the overthrow of the Temple, and the scattering of their posterity from the land that they had not desired. Two thousand years later, on that same night of Ab, He

overthrew the Temple, and He scattered them. And two thousand years after, on that same night of Ab, scattered over the earth, Israel still weeps.

Then the Holy One, blessèd be He, said to the Prophet: "Thou art silent, My son? Thou dost not plead for them?" "Not for them, Lord, but for Thee! If Thou leavest them now, what will the Nations say? That Thou hast not been able to keep Thy people; that Thy people hath not wished to keep Thee; that against the gods of Egypt Thou wast strong enough, but against those of Canaan Thine arm is too short; that in the desert Thou wast able to lead them; that into the Land of Promise Thou wast not able. And if Thou destroy them, what will say the worlds? They will say: 'Knoweth this God aught save destruction? He hath destroyed the generation of the Flood; He hath destroyed the generation of Babel; He hath destroyed the generation of Sodom; He hath destroyed the Egyptian; and now He destroyeth the children of Israel!' And for the ages after the ages Thou shalt be a God of hate, O Thou God of Love! I am naught; Thy children of Israel are naught. They have in no wise deserved Thy forgiveness; yet pardon them; if not for them, for me; if not for me, for Thyself, King of the World."

And when he had spoken, without any word, amid the howlings of the night, God answered him.

Next day, in the morning, Moses assembled the tribes and said to them: "When will ye understand the Eternal? For you He divided the sea; scarce had ye passed dryshod than ye asked once more for the bondage of Egypt. For you He rained down manna; scarce had ye tasted of it than ye demanded to have your excrement. He gave Himself to you upon Sinai: ye worshipped the Golden Calf. For you He gave me His Torah: ye cried to Him: 'Take

back Thy Torah.' And now that He bringeth you to the Promised Land, ye cry unto Him : ' Take back Thy land and Thy promise.' Think ye He needeth to destroy you, armies, giants, or Amalekites ? He who with a word made the world, with a word can destroy it. Nevertheless, ye shall not all perish ; for thus saith the Lord : ' The ten slanderers shall be punished according to their crime ; their tongues shall come forth out of their mouths, and, covered with vermin, shall descend unto their navels, and they shall die in the vermin of their slander. Joshua and Caleb shall have, as their reward in the Land of Promise, the portions of those who slandered it. As for you, who have refused it, ye shall have no part in it. Your wives shall enter it, for they have not sinned, neither on the shore of the sea, nor at the feet of the Idol, nor concerning Torah, nor the manna, nor by slander. But not one of those who were numbered at the going out from Egypt, and who to-day are of twenty years and upward, shall see the Land of the Eternal. Each year before the ninth night of the month of Ab they shall count themselves ; and each year on that night the fortieth part of their number shall die in the wilderness. And their bones shall rot in the wilderness, for by refusing the land of life they have refused life itself ; but I will teach their sons, and of them I will make a new generation, that hath not known Egypt nor the idols of Egypt nor its sins, nor your sins ; and that generation shall possess the land that the Torah hath promised.' "

Then they knew their sin, and, now in their repentance, they groaned in shame, as before they had groaned in fear : " What have we done, what folly was ours ? Hath not God loaded us with miracles? Wherefore should He refuse them to us to-day ? No ; we will not wander forty years in the wilderness ; we will follow the Lord to the land that He giveth us. When He seeth our contrite hearts He will give

it to us. To arms ! Let us go up the mountain ! Let us fall upon Amalek ; the Lord will be with us, if we are with Him."

In vain Moses tried to hold them back. He said to them : " It is too soon. Your souls are not yet ripe for the vintage of the Lord." But at once resuming their impudence, they answered : " Stay behind ! We will conquer without thee ! Thinkest thou that God hath need of thee to do His miracles ? "

Arming in haste, pell-mell, the young pushing on the old, the old pushing on the young, without consulting the twelve jewels of the High Priest, without bearing into the battle the holy Ark, they threw themselves upon Amalek ; but he waited for them in the narrow ways, and their blood flowed like the torrents of the mountain. Moses led back their disorder to Hormah.

But he brought back also the grapes of Canaan ; and so abundant was the wine of those grapes that it will suffice until the end of the world to fill, each Sabbath, the cup that the Lord blesseth.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REBELLION OF KORAH

Israel encamped in the wastes of Kadesh-Barnea ; and, to bring up the new generation, Moses taught the Torah to the children ; for, say our Teachers, the world rests upon the breath of the children who learn the Torah.

When a year had passed, on the eighth day of the month of Ab, the trumpet was sounded in the camp, and the crier cried : " Dig yourselves graves ! " The six hundred thousand Israelites digged six hundred thousand graves in the sand. They lay down in them, and all night from the open graves their groans rose to heaven. Next day at dawn the crier cried : " Let the living get up from the dead." Those who still lived rose up ; fifteen thousand old men remained stretched in the dust.

Then the murmuring broke out anew. Dathan the slanderer said to the survivors : " Will ye give fifteen thousand corpses to Moses each year ? Were it not better to risk our courage once for all against the Canaanite and the Amorite, the Hittite and the Jebusite ? " " Nay, replied Abiram the scoffer, they prefer certain death to doubtful victory." " See ye not," continued Dathan, " that Moses decimates you in order the better to reign over you ? Wherefore should ye exhaust yourselves in the desert for forty years by ceaseless marches, save to die ? " " They are fond of walking," Abiram the scoffer retorted, " and they prefer moving over well-warmed sand to the idleness of repose beneath the shade of the fig-tree."

For long, Korah, Pharaoh's former treasurer, who had

brought from Egypt all the treasures of Joseph, had borne very ill the power of the Prophet. He said : " Wherefore is Moses our chief? I am richer than he." His wife Olla, like him, proud, envenomed his pride yet further. It is of her doubtless that it is written : *A foolish woman plucketh down her house with her hands.* For what good did Korah get of his riches ? A bad wife is the ruin of her husband ; and without a good wife no treasure is truly a treasure.

When he came home in the evening, Olla asked him : " What hath thy master Moses taught to-day ? " " He hath taught the *zizith*." " And what are the *zizith* ? " " They are fringes of blue-purple which we must put on the four corners of the *tallith* to remember the Sabbath." " And what is a *tallith* ? " " It is the praying-shawl." " If I make thee a *tallith* wholly of blue-purple wilt thou still need, to remember the Sabbath, blue fringes at the four corners ? Ask Moses, thy master ! And what more did he teach thee ? " " The *mezuza*." " What is the *mezuza* ? " " A small box containing twenty-two lines from the Torah, which we must nail up to the doorpost to remind us of the Lord." " And if thou hast in thy house the whole Torah, must thou still have, to remind thee of the Lord, the twenty-two lines of the *mezuza* ? Ask Moses thy master ! "

And Korah came to find Moses, and asked him while he was teaching the Torah to the children : " Moses, our master, if my *tallith* is wholly of blue-purple, shall I still need the *zizith* ? If I have in my house the whole Torah, shall I still need the *mezuza* ? " " Let thine ear hear what thy mouth uttereth," Moses answered ; " thou must still have the *zizith*, thou must still have a *mezuza*." " Then," retorted Korah, " four fringes in blue-purple are more powerful than a whole *tallith* of blue-purple ; twenty-two lines of the Torah are more powerful than the whole Torah ? "

And he went about saying : " The Torah is absurd. Can absurdity come from God ? It is Moses who invented it

to oppress us." And Moses thought : " How shall I be able to make the new generation, if the old generation undoeth the Law ? "

One evening Korah came home with his head shaven. No one on the way had recognised him. " Who hath thus disfigured thee ? " cried his wife. " Moses," he answered ; " but he hath dressed his brother Aaron like a bride to lead him to the Tabernacle." " He hath humiliated thee." " Yet he hath also shaven his two sons, and all the Levites in like manner." " What matter the others to him, provided that he humiliate thee ; he envieth thy riches, he hateth thee, and thou permittest him to do anything ! Is it just that Elizaphan, thy cousin, should be chief of the descendants of Kohath, who bear the Ark ? Thy grandfather Kohath had four sons : Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. The two sons of Amram, Moses and Aaron, are High Priest and Prophet, which is much. But thou, the eldest of the second, Izhar, ought thou not to come before a son of the youngest son of thy grandfather ? And thou hast let Elizaphan be put in thy place. How long shall Moses laugh at us ? Who hath made him king that thou shouldst obey him ? Free thyself : I desire an husband who commandeth." Then Korah resolved to destroy Moses and the work of Moses.

First of all he assembled the poorer sort, and said to them : " Have ye considered what Moses will cost you, with Aaron his High Priest, and his prohibitions and his ordinances and his tithes ? Suppose that I had had for my neighbour a widow, the mother of two daughters, who had but one field. She came to plough it, but Moses said to her : *Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together.* The Lord forbiddeth it ! She went to sow, but Moses said to her : *Thou shalt not sow with divers seeds.* The Lord forbiddeth it ! She came to harvest and to bind the sheaves. Moses said to her : *Leave the gleanings for the poor, and for the poor leave the sheaves in the corners of the field.* The Lord commandeth it !

She went to store the grain in the barn ; he said to her : *Thou shalt give me the first and the second tithe.* The Lord commandeth it ! Then what did she ? She rose up and sold her field, and bought two sheep in order to clothe herself with their fleeces and profit by their fruit. When they had lambs, Aaron came and said to her : ' Give me the firstborn, for thus the Holy One, blessèd be He, hath prescribed.' She gave up her firstborn. Came the time of shearing ; Aaron said to her : ' Give me the first fleece, for thus hath commanded the Holy One, blessèd be He.' When she had given it to him, she thought : ' It is not in my power to resist this man. Therefore I will kill my sheep and I will eat them.' When they were slain, Aaron said to her : ' Give me the shoulders, the jaws, the stomach, for it is the law of God.' And she cried out : ' What ! Even when they are slain I cannot save them from thy hand ? Then let them be accurst ! ' But he answered : ' Then they belong to me wholly, for thus hath decreed the Holy One, blessèd be He.' And he took them, and he went ; and the widow remained weeping, and her two daughters with her."

Thus Korah scoffed at the Torah before the multitude. Then he added : " Ye will all weep like that widow if ye keep Moses and Aaron to lead you." Some applauded him, others remained silent, but if Medad or Eldad or Caleb or Phinehas or Joshua came by, and reminded them of the virtues of the Prophet and said to them : " If he should order us to take a ladder to climb up to heaven, we ought to take it ! "—Korah was forgotten.

Then he turned to the Princes of the tribes : " The people, he said to them, groan beneath the yoke of Moses, but they know not what else to do save to groan and cry out. Will ye also be content with tears and clamour ? Moses hath made himself king ; he hath made his brother Aaron High Priest, his nephews Eleazar and Ithamar chiefs of the priests. He hath given the instruction of the women to

his sister Miriam ; to his sister's husband Caleb the portion of the spies ; to his sister's grandson, Bezalel, the building of the Tabernacle ; to the son of his nephew, Phinehas, the guarding of the entrance of the Tabernacle ; and to his favourite disciple, Joshua, the command of the army. I ask not for myself ; I am descended from Levi ; but is it just that the tribe of Levi should be set above all ? Why should it receive a tithe from the others ? Wherefore is the High Priest a Levite ? Would not a Prince of Judah or of Benjamin or of Ephraim or of Manasseh or of Reuben or of Simeon be as good a High Priest as Aaron ? "

Having heard him, the Princes of the tribes appeared before Moses and said to him. " Why is the tribe of Levi set above all ? Why doth it receive the tithe from the others ? Why is the High Priest a Levite ? Why should not one of us be High Priest ? " Moses answered them : " The Lord hath set the bounds to the world He hath created. He hath divided the light from the darkness, Israel from the nations, Levi from Israel. For neither families nor races nor things are alike in his creation. Each hath its place, each its function. Let the peoples inhabit the earth, let Israel enlighten the peoples, and let Levi enlighten Israel as the sun lighteth the heavens ; for it would be easier to make alike day and night than to make alike the peoples and Israel, and Israel and Levi. But if ye doubt that it is thus by God's command, let each of you take a rod of dry wood, and on it write his name for his tribe ; Aaron also shall take his rod, and shall mark upon it his name for the tribe of Levi. We will lay up all these rods in the Tabernacle ; then we will await the choice of the Lord."

They did it ; and on the morrow, when they came to take their rods, they saw that the rod of Aaron had flowered and had brought forth almond-blossom.

But Abiram cried : " It had more sap than the others ; it

hath merely put forth again." And none bowed before the choice of the Lord.

Meanwhile Korah, who knew in advance that God would choose Levi, went everywhere repeating : " If the High Priest must be a son of Levi, wherefore must this son of Levi be Aaron ? " And he gathered round him, together with the chiefs of the tribes, the chief among the Levites and among the powerful and the rich, and Dathan the slanderer and Abiram the scoffer, and their friends, all the scoffers and slanderers ; and having in derision dressed them in the *tallith* blue-purple, he gave them, to the number of two hundred and fifty, a feast. When they were full of meat, he said to them : " To free ourselves from Moses let us first of all cast down Aaron. Since the tribe of Levi is chosen to be the first, let a Levite be High Priest first ; then we will each be priest in our turn, and each in his turn will make his Torah." He thought in his heart : " It is I who will be High Priest, and, when I am High Priest, High Priest I will remain, and my Torah will be the Torah."

But, ask our Elders, whence came his certitude ? Korah was crafty and experienced, distinguishing the possible from the impossible ; by what blindness did he rush to his doom ? It was because, having become a bearer of the Ark, he had beheld the future, and, seeing the future, he had perceived, issuing from himself, a whole line of prophets, coming right down to the prophet Samuel. He did not think that his sons and the sons of his sons would do penance for his faults, and through their penance would deserve their exaltation. And, seeing no prophets among the seed of Moses, he said to himself : " God surely wisheth that I, who shall be the father of so many prophets, shall pass before Aaron the High Priest and before Moses the Prophet."

At the end of the feast, Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron, came to claim the portion for the Tabernacle. But the banqueters chased them away, crying : " We recognise

Aaron as High Priest no longer ; we recognise Moses no longer as Prophet ! " They went to complain to Moses, who said to them : " Their feasting hath clouded their understanding ; when the night is passed, then will light return."

Next day Moses summoned Abiram and Dathan first to the tribune of the Torah, for the Law does not permit that the evil-doer shall be condemned without being heard. But they answered him : " We will not go up ! " The madman, without knowing it, prophesieth his own doom : truly they did not go up, they went down to the flames of hell. Having heard their refusal, the Prophet himself went to the doors of their tents, thinking : " Then I shall have done all that I can ; let them, for the last time, have a chance to repent." But they would not let him enter, barring the threshold by their clamorous sarcasm and insult. " What dost thou bring us, son of Amram, " cried Abiram the scoffer, " locusts or lice ? Hail or darkness ? " " And what comest thou to take from us ? " cried Dathan the slanderer ; " if our gold, thou hast already taken it into thy Tabernacle. If our cattle, thou hast already taken it for thine offerings. If our daughters, they have passed their eighth year —too old for thy pleasures ! " Moses thought : " Woe to them that weary the patience of God ! " And he left them.

Sinful, say our Teachers, is the envy that begetteth rebellion. For in order that peace shall reign in the heavens, the Lord permitteth not that the moon shall look upon the stars that shine above her, nor that the stars shall look upon the sun, that is more resplendent than they.

Sinful, say our Sages, is rebellion that begetteth envy ; for what shall become of the vessel that hath lost her pilot, what shall become of the people that hath lost its guide ?

As he returned toward the Tabernacle, Moses saw the multitude in uproar, taking up the words of Korah and the Levites and the Princes allied with him. The applause

changed to hooting at his approach, acclamation to jeers. The anger of the people, bellowing from six hundred thousand voices like the fires of the mountain aforetime, mimicked the anger of God. The Prophet said to Korah : " What demand ye ? The crown of the High Priest. Was it Aaron that took it ? Was it I that gave it to him ? If I had been able to choose, would I not have crowned my son or myself, rather than load my own head with your hatred, yet without setting upon it the glory that ye covet ? Ye are two hundred and fifty men ; can there be two hundred and fifty High Priests ? We have but one Torah, we have but one God ; and God hath set Aaron His High Priest before the Ark in the Holy of Holies, where He hath set His Torah. If it please a king to set his slave upon his throne, is not to rebel against the slave to rebel against the king ? The Lord hath made choice of His servant. Who combateth the servant combateth the Lord."

" Art thou," replied Koran, " the only one to know the will of God ? Thou pretendest that He speaketh to thee secretly, when none can hear His voice nor behold His countenance. But hath He not spoken to us all before the eyes of the whole world ? Wast thou alone upon Sinai, when resounded His Ten Words ? Wast thou alone when His face appeared amidst the flame and the thunder ? We have all seen Him, we have all heard Him. Wherefore shouldst thou alone speak in His name ? Doth Abraham's blessing rest upon thee alone ? Are we not all children of Israel ? Children old enough to choose a leader, and not to choose one if we do not desire one ? "

" Yea, yea," cried the multitude ; " we are all equal ! We desire a leader no longer ! Thou, who art our leader, hast flouted the Ten Words of Sinai that we all heard. Thou hast stolen from us the joys of Egypt, the flesh-pots, the sure bread ! . . . Thou hast lied to us, with thy Land of Promise that exists nowhere, that we shall never

see ! . . . Thou hast desired to become all-powerful through our slavery ! . . . Thou hast dishonoured, by thy malediction, Israel that is thy father and thy mother ! . . . Thou hast committed adultery with the souls of our wives ! . . . By taking away all rest from our days and our nights, thou hast broken the Sabbath rest. Thou hast killed us by hunger and thirst and pestilence in the desert, and thou desirest to kill us, through forty years, by repentance ! . . . Thou hast profaned the Name of the Lord, by forcing it to work miracles against us ! . . . Thou hast graven an idol out of flesh, by making of thyself an idol ! . . . And the One God, Him thou hast blasphemed, for thou hast said : ' I am Moses, your God.' "

He answered them : " Fools ! I was king in Egypt, and for you I left my royal estate ; I was shepherd in Midian, and for you I left my solitude. I spake before Pharaoh ; I divided the sea ; I fed you with miracles as the mother feedeth her child with milk. Forty days and forty nights I fasted upon the mountain to meditate the Law of your salvation, and I shattered this Law to take upon myself the burden of your sins. Forty times have I faced death beneath the stones hurled by your hands, and forty times I have faced it to constrain God to pardon you ! He hath pardoned you your cries of suffering and your cries of anger ; for the Lord is just and long-suffering, and what man crieth out in anger or pain, to that He giveth not ear. May He pardon you to-day yet once more, for ye cry out in ignorance : others have put your complaints into your mouths. But them the Lord shall not pardon. For they cry not out in anger nor in pain nor in ignorance ; their cry is envy and they know what they say. They are the proud, the scoffers, the slanderers, the rich, the Princes of the tribes, and the Princes of the Levites, who understand, who see, who should enlighten you ; and they extinguish the light, they tear up the Torah in the night ; they throw back

the world into the chaos of the night. Get ye apart from them. Depart afar from the tents where they dwell. Upon them is hurled the anathema ; I cast them out from Israel and I cast them out from the Lord."

And while the multitude drew back in silence and in terror, he cried to Korah, to the Princes, to the Levites, to the two hundred and fifty sinners upon whom his malediction fell : " To-morrow come ye to the Tabernacle ; let each of you take a censer and put fire in it and incense. Ye shall all, with Aaron, offer your incense before the Lord. I shall not be there, but God will be there. Once again shall He show His servant ; and ye yourselves shall do the miracle that shall shut your eyes, and open the eyes of Israel ! "

In the night the Lord said to the Prophet : " Moses, My son, what wouldst thou that I do ? " " Hast Thou created hell King of the World ? " replied Moses. " If Thou hast created it, engulf them." " What ! " answered the Lord, " thou who wast wont to demand pardon, now thou demandest punishment ? Thou, who would pardon them when they rose up against Me only, now, because they rise up against thee, would not pardon them longer ? I said to thee : ' When My face is justice, thine shall be mercy,' and now when My face is mercy, thine is justice." " How, Lord, shall I make a new generation if the old continue, and if it destroy it in advance ? " " In forty years they will all die." " The rebels must die to-day, or Thy Torah will be dead before it hath lived."

And, as God remained silent, the sun and the moon appeared before Him, crying : " Lord, the sinners that Moses condemneth, our eyes will no longer see them ; if Thou dost not cast them out, we will light the world no more." " Rebel lights ! Ye lighted the generation of the Deluge, and of Babel, and of Sodom, that I had condemned : and now ye would not light them whom a man

condemneth?" And to constrain them to their tasks, He hurled upon them his lightnings. Since that day, says Rabba, at every dawn and at every evening God Himself has to hurl the moon and the sun into the day and the night, for they refuse to light sinners.

Moses still implored Him, crying: "Lord, Lord, was it I who asked of Thee to lead them? Have I not entreated Thee to leave me to my littleness? I have followed Thee, I have served Thee, for Thee I have suffered reproaches and anguish. What shall become of me, what shall I do if Thine enemies triumph? Hast Thou not sworn to me Thine help? Leave me not. Be Thou the artificer of my work; or if these die in their beds the common death of men, and Thou dost not light against them the fires of Thy wrath, I consent to cry out that Thou art not God, and that Moses is not Thy servant." Then God said: "When a saint commandeth, God obeyeth."

On, the son of Peleth, had a virtuous wife, Dinah. It is of her doubtless that it is written: *Every wise woman buildeth her house; for the price of a virtuous woman is far above rubies. Her children rise up to call her blessed, and her husband also praiseth her.* Dinah, when she had learnt of the Prophet's anathema, counselled her husband: "Go not up to-morrow to the Tabernacle for the offering of incense. What profit wilt thou get of what will come of it? If Moses carry the day, thou wilt be the follower of Moses. If Korah carry the day, thou wilt be the follower of Korah." He answered: "Moses is great; I repent me. But I have given my oath to Korah; I cannot go back upon my oath." What did Dinah? She made him drunk with strong liquor; and on the morrow he did not awake. While he was yet asleep, lo! his couch began to shake; flames and smoke came up from the earth, and the couch trembled and the earth opened. Then Dinah seized hold of her husband, who was already

choking in the gulf, and she cried out : " God of justice, wilt Thou chastise repentance ? " And thus was On, the son of Peleth, saved.

In the same moment the thundering jaws of the abyss opened to devour with fiery teeth Abiram and Dathan, and all their friends and all their children, even to the new-born ; for so baleful is rebellion, say our Elders, that it destroys the innocent with the guilty. And in the same instant Korah and the Princes of the tribes and the Princes of the Levites and all their confederates, raised up, with Aaron, their censers before the Holy of Holies. From the eyes of the Cherubim there sprang five hundred lightnings ; without a sound, without a cry, they entered into the nostrils of the wicked and extinguished their souls within their unscathed bodies. And while the Wrath stretched upon the ground two hundred and fifty corpses, Aaron, alone upright, lifted up his hands to God in the incense rising from his censer. But beneath Korah's corpse the ground disappeared ; burnt already by the fire from On High, he was burnt again by the fires of hell.

Thus perished Abiram the scoffer, Dathan the slanderer, and Korah the proud ; for, say our Sages, the Presence of God rests neither upon the proud nor upon the slanderer nor upon the scoffer ; it rests upon the meek.

Rabba bar Hana recounts how one day, as he was journeying through the desert, an Arab came up to him and said : " Come, I will show thee the place where Korah was swallowed up." He took a rag of wool, dipped it in water, and rolled it round the point of his lance ; then he struck the ground with it ; smoke came up, and in the smoke a voice that cried : " We lied ! We lied ! It is the God of Moses that is God, the Torah of Moses that is the Torah."

When the sinners had perished, Moses said : " Now let me make the generation of the Torah."

CHAPTER XIX

THE INSTRUCTION IN THE WILDERNESS

For forty years they wandered in the wilderness, going from Kadesh to Rithmah, from Libnah to Rissah, from Shepher to Haradah. Miriam's twelve rivers followed them to quench their thirst ; Aaron's cloud hovered above their heads and went before them—burning up thorns and serpents and tigers, filling up the valleys, levelling mountains, blinding with terror the peoples ; and the manna of Moses refreshed their flesh with the purity of its changing savours.

Every year on the ninth day of the month of Ab fifteen thousand old men remained stricken in the open graves ; and the survivors recounted to them who had been born in the desert the bondage in Egypt, the ten plagues upon Pharaoh, the sea divided for the tribes set free, the fiery Law given upon the mountain, the Golden Calf, the rebellion, and the land that was offered and the God that was refused, and they said : " Happy ye who shall inhabit the land where dwelleth the Holy One ! Of it we have seen but one bunch of grapes, and we shall die without touching the vine whereon they grew. Taste not of our sins ; gather the fruit of our repentance." But many thought in their hearts : " Have we not suffered enough ? Wherefore should we perish without reward ? Why should these who come after us have more than we ? Shall others possess that which was promised to us ? Let them sin in their turn so that they perish like us ! "

But all honoured Moses, who was now bringing up the new generation.

Why, ask our Rabbis, was the Torah taught in the wilderness? Because before the Torah the world was but a wilderness; because without the Torah it would become a wilderness again.

Every night, in the middle of the night, Joshua, son of Nun, the disciple among the disciples, prepared the linen shirt upon the pillow of his still sleeping master, and shook the dust from his mitre and his tunic and his sandals, and placed them near the bed; he went to draw water for cleansing, and to arrange, in the court of waving walls, the seats in their semicircles and the raised throne. Then he commanded to the crier to cry: "Assemble to hear the word of God!" And while the disciple served the master and dressed him, the children and the youths and the men went to the Princes of the tribes, to the Elders, to Eleazar and Aaron, who led them in procession to the feet of the Prophet to wish him the joy of the morning; then all escorted him up to the Tabernacle, where Joshua seated him upon the golden throne. Then, taking up the lesson at the place where on the previous day he had left it, Moses would speak.

Great is peace, our Elders have said, for between the angels of snow and the angels of fire the Lord in heaven has set peace; and if the angels themselves have need of peace On High, how much more have men need of it here below?

Great is peace, our Doctors have said, for in order that it should exist the Eternal permits that the divine Name itself should be blotted out.

Great is peace, our Sages have said, for war itself begins by a summons to peace.

This is why the Prophet taught: "When ye shall go out to fight, ye shall say to the people: 'If a man have built a house and hath not yet dedicated it, let him go and return to his house, for he may fall in the battle, and

another dedicate it. If a man have planted a vine and hath not yet had pleasure of it, let him go and return to his vine ; for he may die in the battle, and another shall have his pleasure. If a man have betrothed a wife and hath not yet taken her, let him go and return to his wife, for he may die in the battle, and another take her. And if a man have fear in his heart, let him go and return to his fear, lest his brethren's hearts faint with his fear. Thus shall peace dwell among you. Then, before beginning battle, ye shall say to the enemy : ' Let peace be made betwixt thee and me,' and if he refuse it, then only shall ye take your weapons."

Bukki, son of Jogli, asked : " Moses, our master, thou hast taught : *Great is peace*. Why, then, must there be war ? " And Moses answered : " To make a greater peace."

He said again : " When ye shall have entered into the land that God giveth you, ye shall share it out among you, family by family ; each shall have its field and its vine, and none shall have more than another. Six years ye shall sow your fields, six years ye shall labour your vines, and they shall give their fruit. But the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord. In that year thou shalt not sow thy field nor prune thy vine, thou shalt not reap thy harvest nor gather the grapes of thy vine ; they shall belong to all : to thee and to thy servant and to thy maidservant and to thy hired servant and to the stranger that sojourneth with thee, and to thy cattle and to the beasts that are in thy land. Then thou shalt number seven times seven years ; and thou shalt cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month ; in the Day of Atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof :

it shall be a Jubilee unto thee, and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. For God will not suffer that he who hath heard the Word of the Lord shall be a bondman, and God will not suffer that field be added to field and vine to vine, for 'the land is Mine,' saith the Lord."

Kemuel, son of Shaphtan, asked : " Moses, our master, thou hast taught : ' The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,' why, then, must Israel have its portion of earth ? " And Moses answered :" So that one day it may give back to God the whole extent of earth."

And the Prophet said again : *Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One* : thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might ; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. For God created man in his own image. To love man is to love God. Wherefore, when the Lord shall have cast out from before thee the peoples whom He shall dispossess, keep thyself from walking in their ways. Inquire not after their gods, saying : How did these nations serve their gods ; even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God ; for every abomination unto the Lord, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods ; for even their sons and their daughters they have burned in the fire to their gods. Wherefore in the Lord's land practise the Torah in purity and in love. For if thou dost not err from His commandments, neither to the right nor to the left, thou shalt be blessèd in thy city and blessèd in thy field ; blessèd shall be the fruit of thy loins and blessèd the fruit of thy soil ; blessèd shall be thy baskets and thy pans ; blessèd shall be thy birth and thy death ; blessèd thy life after thy death. The Lord, as He hath sworn, will make of thee a nation of priests, who shall unite the peoples one with another, and shall unite them to God. But if thou dost not

observe in thy land the Covenant that the Lord thy God hath made with thy fathers, thou shalt be accursèd in thy city and accursèd in thy field, accursèd shall be the fruit of thy loins and accursèd the fruit of thy soil ; accursèd thy pans and accursèd thy baskets ; accursèd thy birth and accursèd thy death ; and accursèd thy life after thy death. The sky above thy head shall be of brass and the earth beneath thy feet shall be of iron. The Lord shall strike thee with dizziness and with blindness, and thou shalt go groping through the light like the blind through night. And because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joy in the time of abundance, thou shalt serve thine enemies in hunger and thirst and wretchedness. The Lord shall scatter thee among the peoples throughout all the earth, and shall make thee a reproach to the peoples. He will put anguish into thine heart and trembling into thy flesh. In the morning thou shalt say in terror : ' Would it were still night,' and at evening, ' Would it were still morning,' and thou shalt scarce know if thou still livest. For God desireth to inhabit with thee this land that He giveth thee, and if thou cast Him out, He will cast thee out. And then His Presence, which through thy virtues should inhabit the earth, will once more, by thy sins, be exiled into heaven."

Pedahel, son of Ammihud, asked : " Moses, our master, thou hast taught : ' God can do all things.' If God can do all things, how can man cast him out of the earth ? " And Moses replied : " It is because all things are in the hand of God, save fear of God." And Paltiel, son of Azzan, asked : " Moses, our master, wherefore must we put God on earth ; ought we not to join Him in heaven ? " And Moses answered him : " Man deserveth the kingdom of heaven only if he hath wished to establish it upon earth."

And while the Prophet in the school of the wilderness inculcated the Torah into the children of Israel, Zagzagel

in the School On High inculcated it into the angels, and in the Garden of Eden the Holy One, blessèd be He, inculcated it into the Righteous, who are above the angels.

The Righteous, going to the Garden of Eden, passed before the gate of hell, and the wicked, going to hell, passed before the gate of Eden ; and Adam, exiled in his penance between the two gates, cried to the Lord : " King of the World—whom my sin cast out from the world—when shall my penance have an end ? " And the Holy One, blessèd be He, answered him : " In the beginning I made but one man, mingling the dust of all the places of earth. From thy sin are come men, separating their dust one from another. At the end, joining together all the spaces of the earth, mankind once again will be but one man. Then thy penance will be accomplished."

Thus, covered by the cloud, watered by the twelve rivers, and nourished by the manna, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness from Tahath to Terah, from Hashmonah to Moseroth, from Haggidgad to Yotbathah, receiving and reciting the instruction of the wilderness.

Now, sometimes in the silence of the night Moses went out of the camp, seeking solitude, that he might, as in the days of the burning bush, make in his soul a desert.

One night, as he was seated in a cave, that same cave where, later, the prophet Elijah meditated, he entreated God : " What have I known of Thee, Lord ; what have I been able to understand ? I have seen Thy Throne of Splendour, but is Thy throne Thyself ? I have seen Thy face, but is Thy face Thyself ? I have called Thee mighty, strong, merciful ; I have called Thee Truth, Peace, Love ! But to give Thee a name, is it not to diminish Thee ? And to diminish Thee, is it not to blaspheme Thee ? Art Thou not above all these things of man : power and justice and mercy, and truth and peace and love ? And that Name Thou

Thyself hast taught me, the Unutterable Name that I alone do utter, and that signifieth : I AM THAT I AM, is it not also too small for Thy Majesty, that is greater even than Being? Thou hast spoken to me in my language, speak to me in Thine. Thou hast opened to me forty-nine gateways to understanding ; open unto me the fiftieth, O Lord ; so that beyond Thy Throne and Thy Face and Thy Name I may know Thee and understand Thee and behold Thee as Thou Thyself beholdest." And God answered : " Stay shut in the cave of thy solitude ; and look, and I will pass by." Then with the eyes that are not of the body, with the eyes that are not of the soul, the Prophet looked ; but he saw naught save the shadow of a shadow, as it is written : *No man shall see God and live.*

But as he came out of the cave, behold, in their open tombs, beneath the full moon, all the dead fallen in the desert ! Moses said to them : " Alas, alas ! for forty years I pastured Jethro's sheep in the pastures of Midian ; I never lost one ; and ye, my brothers, my sons, whom I led to pasture in the Land of Promise, along the way I have lost you all. God taught you the Torah ; despite His Torah ye have learned nothing. He aided you with His miracles, despite His miracles ye have nothing conquered. Will your sons follow me, or shall I lose them also ? Will they live for the Torah, or will they die through it ? Will the Lord still desire to perform miracles for them ? Lord, Lord, I have brought up in the Torah a new generation ; let it not be like the old one ! King of the World, let them live, let them live, these new sons ! And mayest Thou do for them this miracle, that they hear Thee and follow Thee without any miracle ! "

And as he drew near he looked at the open tombs : the tombs had grown, the dead had grown. Their shrouds were not in rags ; their flesh was not dust ; neither the worms of

the earth nor the vultures of heaven had been near their untouched bodies. But the iron of their swords shone in their hands ; the redness of blood glowed in their faces ; the light of day came from their eyes, and Moses said to them : " What ! my brothers, my sons, over your bones I prophesied corruption ; but God hath preserved them alive in death ! Did ye not then blaspheme the Name of the Lord ? " " But we sang His Name in the Divided Waters," the dead answered. " Did ye not then give your gold to the Golden Calf ? " " But we gave it to the Tabernacle," the dead answered. " Did ye not, then, refuse the Land of Promise ? " " But we sought it, and thou still seekest it ! Return, Moses ; when thou hast found it, thou shalt lead us thither on the other side of death." Then the Prophet cried : " Lord, Lord, no man knoweth Thee ! no man shall know Thee. But since these, who were born in ignorance and in idolatry, have known Thee enough to attain Thee in the grave, they who are born in Thy light shall know Thee enough to go whither Thou goest."

Now in the fortieth year, after they had left Yobathah for Abronah, then Abronah for Ezion-Geber, the Israelites returned to encamp at Kadesh-Barnea. On the eighth day of Ab the crier cried : " Dig yourselves graves." They digged themselves graves, lay down in them, and all night groaned aloud. The next day at dawn the crier cried : " Let the living get up from the dead." But all rose up : the generation of sin no more.

Then Moses said : " Let the generation of the Torah enter into the Land of the Torah."

CHAPTER XX

THE NEW SONS

The Torah, according to our Masters, does not tell us to run after duty ; it is enough that we await it. It commands : " If a bird's nest *chance to be before thee* in the way, thou shalt let the mother-bird go free." It commands : " *If thou meet* thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt bring it back to him." But concerning peace, it commands : " *Seek out* peace."

Therefore Moses sent a message to the King of Edom, saying : " The time is come when the Lord our God shall deliver to the children of Israel the land that was promised to their fathers. Our way traverses thy country. Let us pass through in peace ; we will make no use of our weapons, we will not touch thy wells, nor thine harvests, nor thy cattle ; for rivers follow us to quench our thirst, and the manna of heaven feedeth our hunger." But the King of Edom having refused, Moses did not wish to force him, although he had the aid of the Lord ; and for the sake of peace he chose the longer way that goes by Seir.

When the Israelites were already folding up their tents, Miriam the prophetess died. She, like the sinners of the wilderness, was not allowed to enter into the Land of Promise, because she had slandered the Prophet. He wept her, his head covered with ashes, crouching bare-foot upon the ground, his mantle torn, with his brother Aaron and his mother, the aged Jochebed, who, having given birth to six hundred thousand Israelites through the deliverance of Moses, survived the High Priest and the Prophetess and the

Prophet, and alone followed to the end the sons of her six hundred thousand sons.

Thus, all three wept.

Why, ask our Sages, hath the Holy One, blessèd be He, put a bitterness into our tears ? In order that this bitterness shall hurt our eyes and prevent them from weeping too long ; for so great is our grief over death that if our eyes could weep like our hearts, they would lose their sight by excess of tears.

And now all three were silent, for they had no more tears for their grief. And lo ! in their silence, there came to them the mingled and increasing voices of a multitude. " What is this tumult ? " asked Moses. " Our master," replied Aaron, " dost thou then not know that these new children of Israel have tender hearts ; they come in compassion of our grief." " If they came in compassion," murmured Jochebed, " they would come in silence."

And in truth our Elders have said : " Only silence gives value to compassion."

But already faces grimaced and fists threatened in the entrance of the tent. " Miriam's well hath dried up. The twelve rivers have ceased to flow ; there is no more water for our children ! No more water for our beasts ! What dost thou here weeping the dead, when the living die of thirst ? Water ! Water ! We must have water ! "

Never yet had Moses been angered to the point of cursing his people. His patience equalled his love, and fled wrath, for wrath taketh away wisdom from the wise and sight from the seer. But on that day he forgot his patience.

Every good thought gives birth to an angel, our Rabbis have said ; and these men whom thirst had made to rebel had thought of the thirst of their animals ; but the Prophet could not see the angel born of that thought, for rage blinded him.

" What," he cried, " ye come to insult the mourning for

her who watered your thirst during forty years ! I have set over you chiefs of tens, of hundreds, of thousands, Princes of tribes, Elders ; if ye need water, go ask them for it ! " " Nay, it is thou, our leader, who must give it. Who hath led us into this desert without wells ? Is it they or thou ? Give us water ! " " I have none." " Perform a miracle." " A miracle ! They will not live without miracles ! And if I cannot perform one ? " " Thou didst divide the sea, according to what thou tellest : and thou canst no longer perform miracles ? For our fathers, who had sinned, thou couldst, and for us, who have not sinned, thou canst not ? Give us water, Prophet, or thou shalt have stones ! " And already they began to stone him. Then, rising up from his grief, he fled to the Tabernacle ; and God said to him as aforetime : " Speak to the rock, and water will gush forth."

Now he walked in the desert of Meribah ; rage swelled his nostrils, his rod trembled in his hands, and the voice of his soul cried out : " Forty years have I taught them, and behold what they know ! Because they have been one hour without drinking ! As soon as their bellies speak their hearts are silenced ! O generation of rebels and blasphemers ! " And all howled after him : " Strike this rock, strike that one ; wherefore choose ? For a miracle all rocks are good enough." But he, in the night of his fury knew not where to strike. Then the multitude stopped. " Thinkest thou to lead us to the end of the world ? We will wait no longer ! Water at once ! Water, or thou diest ! " " Rebels, sons of rebels ! If I gave you to drink all the torrents of the mountains, you would still thirst for cursing and sacrilege." " Strike, strike ! " " But know I whether the water will flow ? " " He knoweth not, he knoweth not ! Wherefore art thou not dead with our fathers, if thou knowest no more than they ? Thou didst slay them during forty years ; now it is we whom thou wouldst kill."

He struck: a single drop of water dropped from the rock! "Are we sucklings? Wouldst thou have us suck? Water! Water! Rivers! Seas!" Then his mighty fist rose up to heaven and his wrath fell, shattering the rock: a sea of blood gushed forth, flooding the desert. And all cried: "God is no more with him, he is Prophet no more." And the rock cried: "Wherefore hast thou struck me." And God also cried: "I told thee to speak to the rock; did I tell thee to strike it? I told thee to lead My people; did I tell thee to outrage them? If they are sacrilegious blasphemers, wherefore shouldst thou go whither they go? Thou teachest doubt to them that have faith; thou effacest My Name in the hearts of them who seek Me; and thou wishest that they find Me?" And he commanded the rock: "Be healed of thy blood; let water cleanse thee." The blood covered the sand of the desert with roses, and the water reflected them. Instantly all cried: "Moses is our Master, is Moses the Prophet?"

As he returned, alone, to the Tabernacle he groaned to the Lord: "I have sinned, Lord: anger clouded my heart. I no longer hoped that Thou wouldst perform a miracle." "Wherefore should I no longer? Am I weary of being God?" "For forty years I had implanted in them Thy faith; I hoped that they would believe without miracles." "Thou thyself, didst thou believe without miracles? Thou wouldst curse them because they are as thou wast? Did I not say to thee in the bondage of Egypt: 'Reverence in them the people'? For so great is the people that I permit the High Priest to turn his back on the holy Ark, where I am enthroned, to bless the people." "Yea, Lord, I have sinned. Wilt Thou pardon me?"

God was long silent; then He said: "Lead them."

Now the cloud that chased before it the nations, burnt up the serpents, filled the valleys and flattened the summits,

had left standing in the desert three mountains : Sinai, for the Lord, Hor, for the High Priest, and Nebo, for the Prophet. When they had arrived at the mountain Hor, they encamped at the foot of the mount ; and the Lord said to the Prophet : " Moses, My servant, I have to give thee a message that weigheth on my heart." " What is it, Lord ? " " Aaron thy brother, even as Miriam, hath sinned by slandering thee before My face. He must die even as the generation of sinners," " When I, a sinner, have pardoned, wilt thou not pardon, Lord ? He hath sinned but once, and Thy mercy is great." God answered : " Was it not through a single sin that death came into the world ? And were it just that the High Priest were spared, when six hundred thousand corpses are stretched out in the wilderness ? But Aaron thy brother hath never had any secret from Me ; I desire not to have any from him. Announce to him that he is about to die ; to tell it to him Myself, I cannot : I have not courage enough, though I am God." Then Moses' heart broke into tears. He entreated : " Lord, Lord, Thou art King over every creature, the will of every creature is in Thy hand ; but how could I be willing to announce his death to Aaron my brother, who is older than I ? " " Lead him up upon the mountain, with his son Eleazar ; what must be said, thou shalt say it to him."

Since God Himself obeys the Prophet, can the Prophet not obey God ? On the next day, before the hour of the morning, when his custom was to await the people, the Princes, the Elders, and the High Priest, Moses rose and said to Joshua : " Go and announce to the people, to the Princes, and to the Elders, that they shall meet me at the dwelling of Aaron my brother." When he had come there, Aaron asked him : " Why is it thou who comest to-day, my brother ? " " I have to bring thee a message from God." " What is it ? " " I will tell it to thee when we have gone out." Aaron put on the eight vestments of the High Priest and followed him.

Now the custom was, when they went up in procession to the Tabernacle, that Aaron walked on Moses' right, Eleazar on his left, the Elders and the Princes on each side, and the multitude behind. On that day Moses changed the accustomed order. He placed himself on the right, Eleazar on the left, and Aaron between them. Seeing this thing, the multitude rejoiced, saying : " Moses giveth up to him his place ! Aaron is the more holy ! " for they loved Aaron more than Moses. His part not being justice, he could listen wholly to the promptings of his heart. He went from hearth to hearth teaching goodness to the children, explaining their duty to the grown-ups ; not content to make peace between man and God, he made it between the wise, and between the ignorant, and between the ignorant and the wise ; in memory of the marriages he had reconciled, forty thousand sons in Israel were called Aaron, and when a sinner was about to sin, he would stop himself short, thinking : " If I sin, shall I be able to look without shame into Aaron's eyes ? " So on that morning all were joyful.

When they had come before the Tabernacle, the High Priest would have gone in. " No, Moses said to him ; we will go out from the camp to-day." When they had gone out of it, Aaron asked him : " What is this message from God ? " He answered : " Wait until we are on the mountain." At the foot of the mount he commanded the Elders and the Princes and the people : " Remain here, I will go up with Eleazar and Aaron ; when we have heard God, we will come down again."

While they were going up, Moses sought in his heart for something that could lead Aaron to the thought of death, and, thinking of the soul of man, he said to him : " Aaron my brother, the Holy One, blessèd be He, hath He nothing entrusted to thee ? " " Yea, indeed ; He hath entrusted to me the altar and the Tabernacle whereon are the twelve

loaves of Israel." " Perhaps one day He will ask thee to give Him back His trust ! Hath He not entrusted thee with something else ? " " What ? I pray thee tell me." " A light." " More than one," answered Aaron, " He hath given into my charge the seven lights that shine in the Sanctuary." And, not daring to speak to him more of the soul, Moses said again : " Truly hath God named thee well, the simple of heart."

Now, as they conversed together, a grotto opened before them. " How beautiful it is," said the Prophet, " let us go in " ; and he trembled, for now he must tell the High Priest to take off the priestly vestments. " Aaron my brother, perhaps there are graves in this grotto. Would it be meet to defile by their nearness thy holy garments ? " " Thou speakest truth, Moses my brother ; let me take them off and invest with them my son Eleazar." Then the Lord performed a miracle : as Aaron took off one by one, to invest with them his son Eleazar, the triple-crowned tiara which expiates blasphemy, the breastplate, with its double clasp, that expiates forfaulture, the golden ephod that expiates idolatry, the coat with bells that expiates slander, the straight mitre, the girdle of secret folds, the shirt without folds, and the breeches of fine linen that expiate pride and theft and lying and concupiscence, the Holy One, blessèd be He, to hide from earth and heaven the nakedness of His High Priest, covered him with the eight vestments of Divinity, which are : Majesty, and Might, and Glory, and Magnificence, and Justice, and Mercy, and Truth, and Love.

When Eleazar was dressed in the splendour of the priesthood, Moses commanded him : " Wait here." Then, alone with Aaron, he entered the grotto. They saw there a couch, a table, and a lamp which angels were lighting. Then Aaron said : " Moses my brother, wherefore hide from me longer the message from God ? Even if it should be my death, I am prepared for it." " But I, my brother," Moses answered,

" was I prepared to announce it to thee ? " " Alas, alas ! that thou didst not speak sooner, Moses ; when I still had near me my mother, my wife, and my other children ! . . . "

The Prophet would have consoled him : " Thy son Eleazar hath walked in thy ways ; thou wilt live on in him ; he shall be High Priest after thee, and unto the end of days all the High Priests of Israel shall be, from son to son, sons of Aaron. But what shall my own son be ? He hath in no wise cherished the Torah that I have taught. No prophet shall come forth from my loins ; I shall be alone after my death, alone as in my life ! And, see, angels await thee ; thy son accompanied thee hither ; they will accompany thee hence."

But Aaron answered no more. The angels stretched him upon the couch in silence ; and in silence he went whither go the angels.

When the Prophet came out of the grotto, Eleazar asked him : " Moses, our master, where is my father ? " " He is with God." And they went down again. But when, at the foot of the mountain, the multitude saw them return without Aaron, all cried out : " What have ye done with him ? They have killed him ! They have killed him ! Eleazar desired his tiara, Moses desired glory. Murderers, murderers, ye have killed him ! " And once again the stones rained from the ground to stone them. But suddenly, in the height of the mountain, the grotto opened ; the angels came forth, soaring through space, their wings bearing Aaron's sacred body. The Lord, intoning praise, chanted : *He that walked in righteousness, I have desired that he shall enter into peace.* And the angels made answer : *Goodness was upon his mouth, love upon his lips. In peace he hath gone out, into peace he hath entered.* And knowing that God Himself had taken back His High Priest, all mourned for him.

Skirting the land of Edom, Israel now continued its march through the wilderness. But, as Miriam's well of

twelve rivers had disappeared with her, so had the cloud of glory and its twelve splendours with Aaron. Seeing, for the first time, the stars of heaven, more than one Israelite fell on his knees and worshipped them. And all lamented, for the thorns and the wild beasts were no longer burnt up before them and all were terrified, for the peoples, no longer dazzled by the splendours of the cloud, asked themselves : " Is this, then, the people whom its God protected ? Its God abandoneth it ; we can destroy it."

Now Amalek lay in wait for them, for he is always there when Israel weakens. He fell upon the Israelites. The Levites repulsed him ; but, in spite of the victory, the murmuring broke out again : " How long is the way ! We had almost arrived, and because a king of Edom refuseth us passage we perforce must retrace our steps ! Must we, like our fathers, wander forty years in the wilderness ? " Moses chided them, saying : " Ye have angered the Lord against me." And they answered : " For our fathers thou wast a Pharaoh more cruel than Pharaoh. Wherefore did they follow thee ? We will follow thee no more ! "

Then among the men of Gad, of Simeon, of Asher, and of Benjamin a cry rose up : " Let us save ourselves from slavery, let us return into Egypt ! " Folding their tents, thy left the camp and fled in eight days of haste right to Mosserah. The rest pursued them : " Lord, Lord, groaned Moses, shall Israelites shed the blood of Israelites ? " But God answered not. Before the trembling face of the Prophet, brothers armed hurled themselves upon their brothers. And for seven days and for seven nights, his head covered with ashes, crouching with bare feet upon the ground, with his mantle rent, Moses the victor mourned over his victory.

Again they went forward. The complaining began again : " Where are the grapes that Caleb brought back ? Where are these trees whence floweth honey, these fields watered

with milk ? Manna, always manna : manna in the morning, manna in the evening, manna on the Sabbath, manna week in and week out ! How long shall we have no other food but this accursèd manna ? "

Then all the serpents that Aaron's cloud had stupefied during forty years awakened from their torpor in the wilderness. Before the Israelites, behind the Israelites, to the left, to the right, to the right, to the left, as far as their eyes could see, they beheld the slow heaving of the reptiles rolling and unrolling their knotted tanglements, whence came forth in myriads the red spines of their envenomed fangs.

Why, asks Rabbi Judan, were they punished by serpents ? Because God had said to the serpent : " Thou shalt eat of the dust of the earth," and the serpent complained not. And he had said to Israel : " Thou shalt eat of the manna of heaven," and Israel complained. What then meeter than the serpent to chastise Israel ?

The reptiles wrapped themselves round their legs, twisted their backs in their glaucous folds, stifled their breasts in their slimy embrace, and spat into their mouths the venom of their fangs.

Nevertheless, the Israelites did not perish ; thickets of serpents in a forest of serpents, they remained upright, still marching on ; and, swollen with their stings, suffocating in their torture, they groaned : " Lord, Lord, we have sinned ; Lord, Lord, we repent."

Then the Lord said to Moses : " How many times didst thou ask of Me forgiveness for their fathers before renouncing hope of forgiveness for them ! Wilt thou not implore Me a single time for these ? " " My heart imploreth Thee, Lord," answered the Prophet, " but my mouth dare no longer. When Thou shalt have forgiven, will they cease from their sinning ? Are they not in all things like their fathers ?

Their fathers slandered me ; they have slandered me. Their fathers rebelled ; they have rebelled. Their fathers clamoured for Egypt ; they have clamoured for it. Their fathers refused manna ; they have refused. There will always be Korahs and Dathans and Abirams amongst them ! Must I always begin anew what I had not finished ? I am weary of sin, I am weary of forgiveness." " My son," God answered him, " art thou, then, sure that in all things they are like the others ? The others slandered thee through hatred of thee ; these through love of thy brother. The others rebelled because they beheld thy faith ; these because they have beheld thy doubt. The others, all, wholly, clamoured for Egypt ; the greater part of these have punished those who clamoured for it. They have refused manna ? They still sin ? Man never doeth enough good to destroy all evil ; but he never doeth enough evil to destroy all good. And if the gates of prayer are sometimes shut, the gates of repentance are open always."

To what may this be likened, ask our Rabbis ? To that king who had a son and a friend. Six times the son sinned against his father, and six times the friend obtained forgiveness for him. The seventh time the friend dared not intercede again. What, then, did the king ? He gave his forgiveness without being asked for it.

" Make thyself a brazen serpent," God said to the Prophet ; " hoist it on the end of a pole and hold it in the air." Moses obeyed ; and it came to pass that each time an Israelite, lifting up his thought toward the Eternal, lifted up his eyes toward the brazen serpent, the grasp of the serpents that suffocated him was released and his wounds healed. And when, after passing by Zalmonah, Oboth, and Iye-Abarim, they came to the valley of Zered, all the serpents were dead, all the Israelites healed.

And Moses wondered : " Will these be indeed the sons of the Torah ? "

CHAPTER XXI

THE WAY OF VICTORIES

As he had, for the sake of peace, asked passage from the Edomites, so also Moses asked it of Sihon, King of the Amorites, and of his brother Og, King of Bashan. "We will not use our weapons," his messengers said to them; "we will not touch your people, nor their flocks, nor their harvests; we will even pay for the water of the wells." But, cursing the Prophet and the Lord, they answered: "We take tribute from the kings of the Canaanites to guard their frontiers; and because thy God, whom we know not, hath promised, so thou pretendest, to give their land to their enemies, should we let them who enrich us be destroyed? I, Sihon, King of the Amorites, send against thee my giants; I, Og, King of Bashan, await thee that thou comest to seek out mine, for neither thy dwarfs nor thy dwarfish God are worth my concern."

When he received these messages, the Prophet trembled with a great trembling; for even to him who hath put his trust in the Lord it is permitted to be afraid, if he lead men whom fear arrests. He remembered the return of the spies on the night of Ab, when six hundred thousand Israelites had howled in terror; and he thought in his heart: "What the fathers dared not, beneath the shelter of the cloud, will the sons dare, when it hath left them?" Therefore he assembled the tribes of Israel and said to them: "Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, King of Bashan, refuse us passage and insult the Lord. But I may not hide from you that they are terrible, for their father, the son of Shemshai the rebel

angel, was Ahiman the giant, whom thy fathers dared not attack. Sihon is greater in stature than any tower in the world, and he is swift as he is tall. Og is so heavy that, no wooden bed being able to bear him, he hath made himself a bed out of the iron of the mountains ; every day he eateth a thousand goats, a thousand sheep, and a thousand oxen, and at each repast he drinketh a whole river. By the size of the chiefs, measure their armies. In the eyes of God they are nothing. He delivereth them unto you, if ye dare. But do ye desire to march against them ? " They answered : " Lead us on."

Sihon the king, with his host, watched for their passage along the Arnon. The slopes of the valley were hollow with caves wherein the Amorites were hidden. And the two mountains that shut it in were so close together that from the summit of one to the summit of the other two men could cry out to one another ; but to pass, it was necessary to go down and then to climb up again over a length of seven miles. When the Israelites had come to the crest of one of the two mountains, the other, like a servant that awaits his master, ran to meet them. As, for the fathers, the water had divided, so, for the sons, the rocks came together. And while they walked upon the miraculous road without even perceiving the miracle, the Amorite king and his giants, as aforetime the Egyptians engulfed by the waves of the sea, disappeared into the waves of the earth.

And when the Israelites had come down, they were athirst. But not one complained, nor clamoured to Moses for water. The Princes themselves digged the rock with their staffs, and as they digged, a river gushed forth, bearing in its flood helmets and lances and pikes and shields in thousands. Then they knew God's miracle, and with one voice all Israel cried out : " It seemeth good to Thee, O Lord, to work wonders ; it seemeth good to us to sing them !

Here, here is the well made by the Fathers of the world, that the Princes of the tribes have sought, that the children of Israel have found." And this song was more beautiful than the song of the Divided Waters.

But why, ask our Rabbis, is the name of Moses absent from this, while he is named in the other? It is because the Prophet, aforetime, had had to chant the song, whose words the Israelites repeated one by one; for if their hearts were already full of God, their mouths knew not yet how to exalt him. Now, Moses sang no more; He listened; and he listened in joy to the instruction in the wilderness multiplied by their voices.

The remnant of the Amorite armies had gathered in Heshbon. God thrust a mask of terror upon their soldiers, and blinded their eyes therewith, and during the whole of the month of Elul, while the Israelites were occupying the country, He, in order that the whole world should know that He was with them, stayed the sun in the sky.

In the month of Tishri, after they had feasted the Feast of Tabernacles, Moses thought in his heart: "They did not fear Sihon, will they not fear Og? Perhaps they will think that God protecteth him, since He hath allowed him to live more than five hundred years." And to prove them, he sent spies to Jazer. They returned saying: "Instead of spying it out, we have taken the city." Then they advanced into the land of Bashan as far as Edrei, whither they came at nightfall. Next day at dawn they cried out: "They have built a mountain in the darkness." This mountain was the giant seated upon the ramparts. He held in his hand another mountain, that his hand hurled upon the camp of the Israelites; but as he hurled it, it fell back on his head and buried him with his city. Thus perished the last of the giants, whose guardian angels God had enchained at the same instant as Abraham bound his

son Isaac on the rock Moriah ; and from the banks of the Arnon, as far as the slopes of Hermon, their two kingdoms fell to the Israelites.

Seeing these things, Balak, King of Moab, feared for his country. In sooth, he had no need to fear, for the Lord had said to Moses : " Thou shalt not lift up thy sword against Moab ; they are sprung from lust and in lust they live ; but they are descended from Lot, son of Haran, who was the brother of Abraham ; and from them shall come Ruth the proselyte, from whom shall be born in the course of the ages my son King David, and in the end of days, my son the King, the Messiah " : for the blood of the nations must be united to the blood of Israel to achieve the union of the world. But Balak knew not whether the Prophet would obey the Lord, and, knowing that aforetime he had been a shepherd in the land of Midian, he consulted, in order to triumph over him, the Elders of Midian.

They said to him : " His might is not in his arm ; it is in his mouth ; take against him a man who is strong in his mouth." Then Balak sent the Princes of Moab with those of Midian to Balaam, the son of Beor, to his city of Pethor in the land of the Two Rivers, saying : " Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt that hath conquered two peoples, and that is encamped before me ; come and curse this people so that I may drive them back ; for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessèd, and he whom thou cursest is cursèd."

Now this was that same Balaam, Israel's old enemy, who formerly in Egypt, as Pharaoh's counsellor, had counselled him to cast into the river all the male children of the Hebrews, so that Moses should die as soon as he had been born. And this Balaam was a prophet as great among the Nations as Moses in Israel. Moses, it is true, surpassed him in that God spoke to him in every hour of the day and of

the night, while he spoke only to Balaam in the night. But, on the other hand, Balaam surpassed Moses in that Moses had to say to God : " Show me Thy ways," while Balaam could say : " I have the understanding of the Most High." For, our Rabbis comment, the Lord, desiring that the Nations should not complain and reproach Him, saying: " Thou hast held Thyself apart from us," gave to them, as to Israel, kings and prophets. Israel had Solomon, and the Nations Nebuchadnezzar. But Solomon built the Temple and Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. Israel had Moses, and the Nations Balaam, but Moses served God and Balaam fought against Him. Which is why, after Balaam, God withdrew prophecy from the Nations and made it the heritage of Israel.

Having heard Balak's message, Balaam consulted the Lord, who answered him : " Thou shalt not go with them. Thou shalt not curse this people : he who toucheth it, toucheth the apple of My eye." But when Balak had sent him nobler messengers and larger presents, Balaam sought God again, who said to him : " Go." And he went, thinking : " How many times hath the Lord cursed His people after having blessed them ; to-day He permitteth me that which He had forbidden to me. Now I may curse them whom He hath blessed ! " The Lord had not changed, for, to him who hath understanding, He changeth never. But, comment our Sages, this teaches us that God enlighteneth us without binding us ; and when the wicked whom He hath enlightened still wish to do evil, He leaveth them to their wickedness.

Nevertheless, desiring in His goodness to inform him yet again, the Holy One, blessèd be He, posted an angel upon Balaam's way. Three times Balaam's ass saw the angel and wished to retrace her steps. Three times Balaam saw him not and struck his ass. Then his ass said to him : " Wherefore dost thou smite me ? " And suddenly he beheld the

angel, who commanded him, saying : " Go ; thou shalt speak according to the word that the Lord shall put into thy mouth." But he did not, or would not, understand what the ass had understood.

Why, ask our Doctors, commenting upon this, has God withdrawn speech from the animals ? It is because, if the animals could speak, their wisdom would make men blush.

Now while Balaam went from the land of the Two Rivers toward Ir-Moab, where Balak was to meet him, Moses encamped with the Israelites in the plain before the Jordan, and he said to them in the joy of his heart : " That which your fathers did not, ye have done ; that which they deserved not, ye have deserved ; wherefore, when we have passed over Jordan, the Land of Promise chosen by the Lord shall be given as an heritage to the people He hath chosen. The largest tribes shall receive the largest portions, the smaller shall receive smaller portions ; and between families it shall be decided by consultation of the twelve jewels of the High Priest." And now the daughters of Zelophehad, who had been stoned in the wilderness, sought out the Prophet, saying : " Our father is dead ; we have not yet husbands, and we have no brothers. Shall we inherit no part of our father's portion, and shall we be spoiled of our portion in the Lord ? " The Prophet answered : " God is not like fathers of flesh and blood, who prefer their sons to their daughters ; He is the father of fatherless daughters ; they inherit from Him. Ye therefore shall have for yourselves and for your husbands your father's portion, and your portion in God."

When they had withdrawn, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad came up and said : " Ataroth and Dibon and Jazer and Nimrah and Heshbon and Elealeh and Shebam and Nebo and Beon, the whole of these two

kingdoms that God hath delivered to the children of Israel is a good land for cattle ; and we have cattle. Wherefore should we cross the Jordan ? Give these lands to us ; we will make of them closes for our sheep, and in them we will live in abundance." " What ! " cried the Prophet, " ye prefer your beasts to your sons ? When the daughters whose father violated the holiness of the Sabbath claim his portion in God, ye refuse yours and that of your children ? In the wilderness ye sighed after Egypt ; now, because ye tread three acres of sweet grass for the pasture of your flocks, ye have found Egypt again, and ye will go no farther ? Is it land or is it God that we have come to seek ? Others would combat to destroy the idols and to join the world to the Lord—and ye would remain here to milk your cattle ? Do ye not remember the spies that came back with the grapes, and casting terror among the tribes, brought down upon your fathers the wrath of the Most High ? Sinners and sons of sinners, must this people wander for another forty years in the wilderness for your sins ? "

Our Sages have said : Let the rich man not boast of his riches, for riches is not in flocks nor in harvests nor in garnered gold, and he who crosseth seas and mountains to seek it goeth forth to seek the void, if he seek not God. And thus the children of Gad and of Reuben, because they had bound themselves to their pasturage and had exiled themselves from the Promised Land, were the first to be cast out of their pasturage when Israel was dispersed into exile.

For they did not listen to Moses ; they insisted on possessing the two kingdoms with their wives, their children, and their herds, promising to cross the Jordan when their brothers should have need of their help. And the Prophet had to yield ; but once more bitterness and anguish were in his soul.

Now, Balaam, coming to curse, had arrived, with Balak

the King, at Kiriath-Huzoth. They went up into the high places of Baal, and made seven altars, and on each altar they sacrificed a ram and a bull. And Balak said to Balaam : " From hence thou canst see the utmost part of their encampment. Open thy mouth and cast upon them thy malediction."

Meanwhile Moses, in the encampment of the Israelites, thought in the distress of his heart : " We had almost arrived, shall we go farther ? Two tribes abandon God, will the others follow him ? Seeing those two well provided, will they have courage, will they have faith ? And if they have neither courage nor faith, will the Holy One, blessèd be He, give them strength ? "

And in the high place of Baal, the Prophet of the Nations opened his mouth to curse, but his mouth, despite himself, proclaimed : " Balak, the King of Moab, hath called me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, to curse Israel. But I come from the places whence departed Abraham laden with blessings : how can I curse Israel ? And Israel goeth to the places that Abraham found laden with blessings : how can I curse Israel ? One may enter a vineyard if the watchmen sleep ; but the Eternal sleepeth not, and Israel is His vine : how can I curse Israel ? Brought forth from Egypt by the hand of his God, he riseth up like a leopard, he standeth as a lion ; he shall not lie down till he quench his thirst with victories and be drunk with the blood of the peoples accursèd. How should I curse Israel ? Blessèd is he that blesseth him, and cursèd is he that curseth him ! "

Thus spake Balaam, and Moses and the world heard his voice. Then Balak said : " What hast thou done ? I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them ! " " I could not curse them," Balaam answered. " Come," said Balak, " let us go up into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and from thence thou wilt

see only the last lines of their encampment; peradventure thou wilt be able to curse them." They went up ; upon Pisgah they made seven altars ; upon each of the altars they sacrificed a bull and a ram, and Balak said to Balaam : " Now cast thy malediction upon them."

And, in the camp of the Israelites, Moses thought in his distress : " And if they do enter the Land of Promise, if they do vanquish the accursèd peoples, will they vanquish sin ? And if they vanquish not sin, will they not be accursèd in their turn ? "

And upon the top of Pisgah, Balaam opened his mouth to curse, but, despite himself, his mouth proclaimed : " God is not a man, that He should lie ; neither a son of Adam, that He should take back His promise : doth He speak, and not do His intent? Before He created the world, when He saw the sins of the world, He knew not whether to create; but when in His vision He had seen Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, He said, 'Let there be light,' and put upon them the light of His benediction. And this light goeth not out ; for when Israel hath sinned, he repenteth of his sin, and, for the sake of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, God pardoneth him his sin ; and when the world hath sinned, Israel repenteth of its sin, and for Israel's sake God pardoneth it. How should I curse Israel ? Blessèd is he that blesseth him, and cursèd is he that curseth him ! "

Thus cried Balaam from the top of Pisgah, and the world and Moses heard his voice. Then Balak said to him : " What hast thou done ? I called thee to curse, and, behold, thou hast blessed again." " I could not curse," Balaam answered him. " Come," said Balak, " we will go up to the top of Peor ; from thence thou wilt see only the shadow of their tents, and, if thou canst not curse them, at least do not bless them." They went up ; upon Peor they made seven altars ; upon each of the altars they sacrificed a bull and a

ram, and Balak said to Balaam : " Now take back from them thy blessing."

And, in the camp of the Israelites, Moses thought in the trouble of his heart : " What if God do pardon them, and they sin again? If He cast them out for their sins from the land that He would have given them, if He disperse them for their sins over all the earth, will they not disappear from the face of the earth, exiling God from the earth with them ? " And upon the top of Peor, Balaam opened his mouth to take back from the Israelites his blessing, but his mouth, in spite of himself proclaimed : " How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel ! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters. They are dispersed among the peoples and they join the peoples together, and from them cometh the Messiah, who joineth them to the Lord. How should I curse Israel ? Cursèd is he that curseth him, but blessèd he that blesseth him ! "

Thus, in spite of himself, he who aforetime had cursed Jacob's children now blessed them ; and, while the Prophet of Israel doubted in his heart, the Prophet of the Nations exalted Israel in the ears of the Nations.

And Moses entreated : " Lord, Lord, may the truth be in Balaam's mouth, and the error in my heart ! "

CHAPTER XXII

THE IDOL OF MOAB

When Balaam left Balak, he said to the King of Moab : " In vain have I sought to curse them ; God blesseth them. But their glory, that none in the world can prevent, thou canst delay. This people is chaste and not lustful. Even in Egypt, in the bondage of Pharaoh, they preserved their modesty ; even in the wilderness, in the idolatry of the Golden Calf, they kept themselves from lewdness. But now the Israelites are encamped at Shittim, where are the springs that flow from Sodom, that shall not dry up until the day of the Messiah. There are the daughters of Midian and of Moab, whose kiss is pleasing to desire ; let them know these daughters, and in the concupiscence of Peor may they forget the Lord ! "

Upon Balak's command, tents were set up, and before the tents old women were posted who offered the Israelites cloths of linen. " Enter in," they said to them, " and ye shall find stuffs yet more precious." They entered in ; the daughters of Moab and of Midian who awaited them gave them garments of purple and of blue, poured them out wine whence blushed debauch ; and, if they refused it, the water of Sodom in which concupiscence pales. Then they said to them : " Why do ye hate us ? We love you, and we are beautiful." But when they would have clasped them they said : " I will not be thine save that thou sacrifice to Peor." " How should I sacrifice to Peor—an idol ? " the Israelite would answer, and he would repulse the girl. Instantly she murmured, with caresses : " Peor

is a god who, for all sacrifice, asketh that thou be naked before him."

At first they sinned secretly beneath the tents of skin ; but soon, when their sin went unpunished, they went with the daughters of Moab to dance about the naked idol ; and the animal cry of their stupration mounted to heaven.

Then Moses groaned to God : " Lord, Lord, was it, then, Baalam who was wrong ? Was the anguish of my heart truthful ? Each new advance is a new trial, each new trial is a new backsliding. That which they never did in the uncleanness of the wilderness they do now that they touch the borders of the land of Thy holiness ! Must I again ask Thy punishment, I who aforetime asked Thy forgiveness ? " For all answer, as in the days of the Golden Calf, the Lord sent pestilence upon them. It went through the camp with green face and body of sores, and mowed down with its bleeding arms the Israelites in their thousands. But, drunk to seize their pleasure from death, they mingled amongst the corpses with the daughters of obscenity whom their Idol protected.

Now Zimri, son of Salu, Prince of Simeon, sought out Cozbi, the daughter of Balak the king, and said to her : " Be mine ! " She answered : " My father reserveth me for Moses, in order that through his sin ye shall all be lost." " I will show thee that I am greater than Moses." And, taking her by her hair, he dragged her to the feet of the Prophet, and cried : " Son of Amram, is this woman permitted to me ? " " Thou knowest my reply," said the Prophet. " Where, then," retorted Zimri, " didst thou go to find Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro ? Cometh she from the Patriarchs, the Midianitess whom thou didst take to wife in the time of thy delights ? Wherefore dost thou forbid us that which thou didst permit to thyself ? "

Moses paled, and was silent. The Elders wept around

him, and Zimri cried : " Live, if it seem good to thee, according to the laws that thou hast made, but by what right would ye bend down others to them ? Shall we be thy slaves rather than Pharaoh's ? Shall we stay, because thou hast decreed it, apart from the peoples, deprived of all the joys that enrich all the peoples ? And shall we destroy all the other gods that command us to take pleasure, for a sad and solitary God that thou hast invented in order the better to subject us ? Let all know : these gods are my gods and their joys are my joys." And, stripping her veils from Cozbi, and stripping from himself his cloak, he threw himself upon the naked girl, and knew her, beneath the eyes of the Prophet and of Israel.

Then Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, the High Priest, cried out : " Moses, Moses, our master, hast thou, then, forgotten thy Torah ? Will God's chastisement suffice His justice if men themselves do not do His justice ? " And beneath the eyes of Israel and the Prophet, thrusting into the bodies of the two clasped sinners his sharp and shining lance, he made of them a single corpse, that he raised on high, like a standard, towards the Lord. The pestilence ceased : they ceased from their sins. Twenty-four thousand Israelites were dead.

" Thou seest, Lord," said Moses, " that I am too old. My years are an hundred and twenty ! Before, when all the tribes of Israel rose up against Thee, I rose up against them; to-day, if one only blaspheme Thee, I remain dumb. I dare no longer punish, nor ask Thee to punish. I know Thy Torah no more ; I know naught now but to weep. Permit me that I avenge Thee upon Midian, then take from me my burden and let me die." " Avenge thyself upon Midian," answered the Lord, " and thou shalt be gathered to thy fathers."

Why, ask our Doctors, did God say : " Avenge thyself," as if it were to avenge Moses ? And why did Moses

say, "that I may avenge Thee," as if it were to avenge God? It was because God thought: "Have I need of vengeance?" But Moses thought: "If we had worshipped the stars, would the Idol have attacked us? It is the Lord that he attacketh in us." For Israel has sins without number, but he is hated for his virtues.

Why, ask our Elders, did Moses wish to avenge God upon Midian? Had not Moab sinned as much as Midian? But from Moab was to be born Ruth the proselyte, from whom was to be born in the course of ages King David, and in the end of the ages the King, the Messiah. Before Moab could be punished, Ruth had to be born.

And why, ask our Sages, did the God of mercy permit on that day vèngeance? It is because, replies Rabbi Simeon, he who leads into sin is the greatest sinner. Two peoples attacked Israel by the sword: Edom and Egypt; and it is written: *Thou shalt not abhor the Edomite; thou shalt not abhor the Egyptian.* But three peoples attacked Israel by sin: Moab, Ammon, and Midian; and it is written: *Thou shalt be an enemy unto the Midianite. Let no Ammonite or Moabite enter into the community of Israel.* And yet such is the grace of the Lord that Ruth the Moabitess saved Israel, and shall save all mankind.

Balaam had prophesied: "Behold this people of God: he riseth up as a great lion; he shall not lie down until he drink the blood of the accursèd peoples." This prophecy, fell upon the Nations and their prophet. Meanwhile Moses, to whom the Lord had said: "Avenge thyself upon Midian, then shalt thou be gathered to thy fathers," could have delayed his death by delaying the war. He gave no thought to this, but when the Israelites, those same Israelites always ready to stone the Prophet, knew that they would have to lose him after the victory, they would not go out to battle, and lots had to be drawn to

constrain, one by one, thirty-six thousand warriors to go out.

Moses resolved not to lead them himself. Doubtless he remembered the proverb : *Cast not a stone into the well where thou hast drunk* ; for aforetime he had found in the land of Midian a wife and cattle. Therefore he set Phinehas as captain over the army, and, putting into his hands the holy Ark, where God is enthroned above the two Cherubim, and binding upon him the breastplate whereon the twelve jewels of the tribes foretell the future, and wreathing him with the golden frontlet whereon is written the Name of the Most High, he commanded him : " Go, thou zealous servant of the Lord ; go, Phinehas, my son, who hast recalled his Torah to Moses thy master ; that which thou hast begun, it is thine to finish it."

In the month of Tebet they returned, bringing back an immense spoil of jewels and of arms, which none had touched, so that it might be equally divided between all the tribes. Reminding themselves that they were fighting for God, they had every morning placed upon their left arm the holy phylactery ; but, waging against idolatry a humane war, they had encompassed the cities on three sides only, so that the enemy could, if he would, escape.

By the sorcery of Balaam, the five kings of Midian and Balaam himself had thought to save themselves by rising up into the air. But Phinehas had raised up toward them the Name of the Most High upon the golden frontlet, and, like six birds pierced by six arrows, they had fallen from the sky. And now the Prophet of the Nations, bleeding, hanged, stoned, and burned, was but a stinking cinder whence came forth serpents. And the venom of these serpents was so laden with maleficence that it will suffice, unto the end of the world, for all the sorcery of all the sorcerers.

Finishing the tale of his victory, Phinehas said to the

Prophet : " Thy warriors have remained pure. When they entered into the houses, to take from them the spoil, they veiled the daughters of Midian in order not to see them. Nevertheless, if it please thee, they will offer to the Holy One, blessèd be He, a sin offering ; for when they approached the women to veil their faces they felt desire in their flesh."

" What ! " cried Moses, " ye have not slain the women ? Was it not they who vanquished us ? Desire ye that they shall vanquish us again ? Sinners a hundred times defiled by sin, think ye that ye are strong enough to live with the Lord in the land that He will give you without killing the idolater and his idols ? Tear up the high places, shatter the altars, burn into smoke their wooden and their brazen statues—but think ye that to extirpate the abomination it sufficeth to extirpate things without soul ? Nay, upon all Canaan I hurl my anathema. Let the men and the women, the old and the young, all without any escape, be put to the edge of the sword ; and upon the land of the Eternal let only God and Israel remain."

Thus cursed the agèd Prophet, and rage swelled his nostrils. When at night he had returned into his tent, God said to him : " Wherefore hast thou hurled the anathema, my son ? Am I a God whom the death of a sinner rejoiceth ? Ought I not to love Mine enemies, as man to love his ? Have I not ordained that Israel shall aid Me to perfect the world, not to destroy it ? " " But in order that it shall aid Thee," answered the Prophet, " must it not be preserved from evil and the evil-doer ? When it sinneth, the Nations of the world rejoice, saying, ' God's love for Israel will be blotted out.' " " Nay," answered the Lord, " all the Nations of the world will not blot out My love for Israel. If I have tried My people more than all the peoples, it is because I try only the strong ; if I bless them more than all the

peoples, it is because more than them have they sought Me out. For the idolater is idolatrous in his mother's womb, but the Israelite believeth in Me before he is born. Wherefore it is that one day, in the end of time, all Israel shall be before Me as the disciple before the master, and shall receive the secret of My revelation, to give it to men and to angels ; for in that day the angels shall be less near to Me than Israel."

" If it be thus, Lord, wherefore Thy wrath against Thy children ? Wherefore did I have to wrest from Thee ceaselessly Thy forgiveness for them ? " " My son, did I not command thee : ' When My face is justice, let thine be mercy ' ? I wished to measure thy mercy before I forgave. But thy mercy hath wearied before Mine ; and thy justice was severer than My justice." " Was I not right in using severity, King of the World, so that the instinct of evil should vanish from the world." " Who, my son, hath created the instinct of evil ? Hast thou not said that it is I ? I have made good and evil, and evil for the sake of good. I have mingled in man angel and beast. Without the angel, what would the beast become ? but without the beast, what would the angel become ? Moab is come forth from lust ; but Ruth shall come forth from Moab, and David from Ruth, and from David the Messiah. Dost thou not see that without Satan the world would perish ? "

As to this, our Elders tell us that Rabbi Johanan cried out one day : " Alas, alas ! Satan hath burned the Temple and massacred the righteous and dispersed Israel among the peoples ; and the Holy One, blessèd be He, permitteth that the Evil One still danceth in our midst ! " From one Sabbath to another the Rabbi fasted, and Satan was delivered up to him. He filled his mouth with lead and shut him up in a cauldron. But all passion ceased in the hearts of men ; no child was any more conceived, and

images of the Lord were born no more upon earth. Then Rabbi Johanan reopened the cauldron and said : " Let Satan be free, to accomplish God's work."

Moses, when he had heard the God of goodness defend the Evil One against him, cried out : " Who can understand Thy ways, O Lord ? Thou wishest that Satan live, and that man serve Thee?" " I wish," answered the Lord, " that Satan live, so that man master him, and that man serve Me to master Satan. For, by giving unto man the passion to perfect himself, I have given him more than perfection. Now I have said to thee all that thou canst comprehend : thou hast vanquished the idol of Moab, thou hast avenged thyself upon Midian ; make ready thy soul : thy day is about to close."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TWILIGHT OF THE PROPHET

Moses had gone out from the camp, and, looking upon the Jordan in the distance, he said to the Eternal : " Lord, wherefore is my death so near ? " " Didst thou not ask to die ? " " Let me first cross over Jordan, then I will go to be gathered to my fathers." The Eternal answered : " Thou shalt not cross the Jordan ; the others shall enter the Land of Promise, thou shalt not enter in." " What, Lord, I shall have led them thus far, and they shall arrive without me ? Think what I have suffered for them : my travail in Egypt, my travail in the wilderness. Thy love that I inculcated into them in pain, may I not teach it to them in joy ? Have I not glorified Thy Sabbath ? Fasted forty days and forty nights to receive Thy Word ? For Thy Name disputed Thy people with sin ? Shall I not have my reward ? Wilt Thou give the lie to Thy Torah, where Thou hast written : *Thou shalt give the labourer his hire before evening*. Wilt Thou be like the king of flesh and blood, who sendeth away his servant when in his service he hath grown old ? Weak as I am, can I not still lead them ? Whither will they go without me ? Without me what will they do ? Wilt Thou keep them, Lord, when Thy prophet is no longer there to keep them ? " " I have found one prophet," answered God, " I shall find others."

" If I must not lead them as Prophet into the Land of Promise, let me enter in as the disciple of another." " Thou shalt not enter it." " Let me enter it like whomsoever amongst them." " Thou shalt not enter it." " If I enter it

not alive, let me enter it dead. Let my bones rest there." " Thou shalt not enter it. I have said that the whole generation of sin shall die without entering in. All are dead. Miriam is dead, Aaron is dead ; like them, without entering in, thou shalt die."

" Have I not walked in Thy ways, Lord, all the days of my life ? Have I not fled iniquity and deceit and forsworn all delight to be Thine alone ? What sin have I sinned to deserve Thy wrath ? " " Seek thy sin." " By the burning bush, when Thou didst wish to send me to save Israel, I said to Thee, 'Send another.'" "That sin was the son of a greater sin." " By the rock of Meribah I refused in my anger Thy miracle for Thy people." "That sin was the son of a greater." " By the idol of Moab I commanded that all the Canaanites, with the women and the children, the young and the old, should be put to the edge of the sword." " That sin was the son of a greater sin." " Lord, Lord, what is this greater sin ? "

Then God said : " Thou hast doubted Me : I forgive thee. Thou hast doubted thyself : I forgive thee. But thou hast doubted Israel, thou hast doubted mankind, wherefore thou shalt not enter into this Land of My Promise. Israel is laden with defilements ; but whence comest thou if it be not from Israel ? My prophet is, My people ; My people is, My prophet. Men are cowardly, perverse, envious, lustful, lying, thieving, murderous, and blaspheming ; but what art thou if not a man ? What thou hast comprehended of Me, wherefore should not the others one day comprehend it also? If with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might thou hadst hoped that they would comprehend, wouldst thou have said, ' Send another ' ? wouldst thou have refused My miracle, hurled forth thine anger, commanded extermination ? "

" I believe in them, I do believe in them, Lord. But so often they disappointed me. My heart faltered ; and that

which I hoped, I dared no longer await." " Hadst thou, then, not seen in Me eternity ? The righteous aideth God ; his aid is in his justice, his aid is in his love, but it is, above all, in his patience. Israel also shall be disappointed a thousand times ; yet he shall wait unto the end of days. And because Israel shall wait unto the end of days, mankind shall wait with Israel ; and because mankind shall wait with Israel, God will wait with mankind."

" Am I God, that I should have the patience of God ? " cried Moses ; " and where is the man who hath never sinned before Thy face ? Wilt Thou not pardon me my sin, King of the World, for the sake of the many times I implored Thy forgiveness when my brothers sinned ? Shall I not obtain for myself Thy mercy, that I obtained for them ? " " Ten times I have judged thee, ten times condemned." " Hath my prayer not changed Thy judgments ? " " Then thy prayer was for all, but to-day thou prayest for thyself only." " Lord, Lord, let me enter into the Land of Promise." " Thou shalt not enter it." " Let me enter, Lord ; say that I may enter it ! " " Importune Me no more ; thy doom is sealed, thy death is ordained." " If I must die, King of the World, permit at least that before I die I may know whom Thou wilt put in my place, and that I may instruct him whom Thou shalt have chosen in what he must do for Thee after me." " Return to the camp ; thou shalt know whom I have chosen, thou shalt instruct him ; and when thou shalt have instructed him thou shalt be gathered to thy fathers."

When the Prophet was in the Tabernacle, he said to the Eternal : " O my God, and God of my Fathers, Thou who searchest the spirits of all mortals, who knowest which is humble and which is proud, which is gentle and which is wrathful, give to Thy children a master more worthy than I to succeed me. Let him have all strength, all wisdom,

all goodness, all justice, all love; may he lead them whither I have not been able to lead them; may he arrive whither I have not been able to come." "My son," the Holy One, blessèd be He, answered, "this perfect man that thou askest of Me shall not come for them till the end of days. But to each day its own task sufficeth, and to each task its own artificer. I have perceived the grief of thy heart. It would have preferred that thy sons after thee should be My servants, but they have not enough cherished My Torah, which is thine; they will not inherit thy spirit, which is Mine: whoso keepeth the fig-tree shall eat its fruit! Joshua, thy disciple, hath venerated and followed thee, hath cared for thee and served thee, from dusk to dawn, and from dawn to dusk. Let him have his reward. While thou still livest let him teach the Torah in thy place, so that later it cannot be said: 'He who knew naught while Moses lived now pretendeth to know all.' And when the disciple hath become the master, thou shalt be gathered to thy fathers."

When he had been told God's message, Joshua wept and rent his garments and threw himself at the feet of the Prophet. "Alas, alas!" he cried; "thou wishest, then, to leave thy people? Who shall lead it? Who shall pray for it? Where shall I find meat and drink for it, where shall I find for it justice and love? What will say the Nations of the earth? That he is no more, he whose mouth was invincible, the Possessor of the divine Name, the Prophet of the Lord. That he is there no more to defend the children of Israel against their enemies and against their God, to invoke the merit of the Patriarchs when they sin, and to bring down from heaven the forgiveness and the wonders that made them all-powerful. Son of Amram, son of Amram, what will become of thy people, if now all the peoples rise up and cry, 'Let Israel be blotted from

the face of the earth ! ' " " Joshua, my son," Moses answered, " belittle not thyself. Knowest thou what I myself was when God chose me, and thinkest thou that He chose me for my strength or my virtues ? His grace hath given me everything ; I was naught without Him. I, too, said to Him, weeping : 'Send another.' Yet I went. Thou shalt go, even as I."

Then, in memory of the thirty-six years Joshua had sanctified by abasing himself before him, Moses, raising up to his own high place his disciple, sanctified, from the first day of Shebat to the sixth day of Adar, thirty-six days.

To honour him during the first week, he stopped in his explanation of the Torah when Joshua entered, and did not continue his discourse until he had sat down. Then, when all had gone out, he taught him the last laws : " Explain to the children of Israel that they are to give to the Levites cities in which to live in their own portions ; for the portion of Levi is the portion of God. Let them choose also cities of refuge wherein the unwilling man-slayer shall find asylum ; for his blood shall not be shed who hath shed blood unwillingly." Often Joshua was filled with fear : " What shall I do," he asked, " when the Jordan is passed and the lands are to be portioned out ? They who receive a mountain will clamour for a valley ; they who receive a valley will clamour for a mountain ! " " Fear not," Moses answered, " the people I entrust to thee is still in its childhood, but it is the people of God. Love it like a child and say to it : ' Love God.' And if sometimes it defy thee, think on the sweetness of loving the children of the Lord."

During the second week, he laid his two hands upon Joshua's head and looked long into his face. And it came to pass that the spirit of God that was in Moses came to dwell in the spirit of Joshua ; and the splendour of God that shone upon the face of Moses shone upon the face of

Joshua ; but Moses kept in his spirit and on his face the spirit and the splendour of God.

Then the Prophet wished to set his disciple at his side in the School of the Torah ; but Joshua at first refused, saying : " Is not the disciple's place at the feet of his master ? " And Moses wished that Joshua should explain the Torah before all, but at first Joshua refused, saying : " Is not the silence of the disciple the praise of the master ? " And the Prophet answered : " None here is greater than thou." And when they were seated side by side upon the golden throne, Moses pronounced an ordinance and Joshua commented it ; Joshua pronounced an ordinance, and Moses commented it ; and their thought was the same, and their word was the same. And Joshua's countenance shone as shineth the moon ; and Moses' countenance as shineth the sun.

During the third week, Moses went forth from his tent preceded by his disciple, and a herald cried out before Joshua : " Come ye all to hear the new prophet, who riseth up over you ! " Beholding the disciple before the master, and the herald before the disciple, all Israel wept, saying : " We will not go ! Woe to the land whose king is a child ! " But Moses answered : " God's love is upon children." He constrained the Elders, and the Princes, and the Chiefs of thousands and of hundreds, and of tens, and the whole people, to do honour to Joshua. And he constrained the disciple to sit alone in the court upon the golden throne, while he himself sat on a bench at his left. And Joshua wept, saying : " Wherefore is this greatness come upon me ? "

During the fourth week, Moses rose up every night in the middle of the night and went in to the tent where Joshua still slept, and prepared for him on his pillow his shirt of fine linen, and shook the dust from his mitre, and from the coat and the sandals that he placed near his bed,

and went to draw water for his cleansing, and to arrange the benches in a semicircle in the court of the swaying walls. While the Elders and the Princes and the Levites and the people learned to go up to the new master, the old master served him and dressed him. Joshua, ashamed and trembling, flung himself at Moses' feet : " O my master, wilt thou not shorten my days by leading me into sin ? " And Moses, raising him up, answered : " Wherefore thinkest thou to sin by accepting from me what I accepted from thee ? Have I not taught thee : ' Honour thy disciple as thyself ? ' and should I not do that which I have taught ? "

During the fifth week, Moses served Joshua, but Joshua wept no more ; he wanted to set him on his throne, but Joshua had already seated himself there. And one day, when Moses entered while Joshua was speaking, Joshua did not interrupt himself, nor rise. Then the whole congregation cried : " What thinkest thou, Joshua, to remain seated when thy master standeth ? " In their indignation the disciples would have killed him. Then Joshua rose up, saying : " Moses, my master, I did not see thee. Wilt thou forgive me ? " And he made him sit on the bench at his left. All cried : " Let Moses, our master, teach us." He answered : " I cannot." And as they all cried : " Teach us, teach us ! " a voice sounded from the sky : " Hearken unto Joshua."

During the thirty-five days of Joshua's exalting, Moses, hoping that God would allow Himself to be swayed, asked everyone to intercede for him.

First he went to Joshua himself, saying : " My son, remember my patience in teaching thee, night and day, my wisdom and the wisdom of God ; pray to the Lord for me, so that with thee I may enter into the Land of Promise." At these words Joshua, in his grief, had struck his hands

together, but as he began to pray, Samael, the archangel of death, closed his mouth, crying : " How dost thou dare rebel against God's command ? " And Joshua held his peace.

Then Moses had sought out the High Priest Eleazar, the son of Aaron, and had said to him : " My son, remember my courage in defending thy father Aaron against Korah, Abiram, Dathan, and the Princes of the tribes and the Princes of the Levites, when they wished to spoil him of his priesthood ; pray the Lord for me, so that with thee I may enter into the Land of Promise." But when Eleazar began to pray, Samael, the archangel of death, closed his mouth, crying : " Pretendest thou to command God ? " And the High Priest held his peace.

Then Moses sought out the aid of Caleb, of Phinehas, of the Elders, of the Princes, of the Chiefs of myriads of thousands, of hundreds, and of tens ; and Samael closed their mouths, every one.

In the last week, he implored all in Israel one by one, saying : " Remember the anger of God against thy fathers, and my supplication that warded off from them His wrath. How many times was Israel about to perish, and my prayer saved them ? Wherefore go ye now into the Tabernacle ; in your turn pray for me, so that God take pity upon me, and let me, with you, enter the Land of His Promise." But when the multitude uttered their entreaties to God from the Sanctuary, lo ! an hundred and eighty-four myriad angels, led by Samael, came down from heaven, and, seizing their prayers in flight, prevented them from rising up to the Lord.

Thus during thirty-five days, Moses, each day humiliated yet more deeply before his successor, sought to delay his death.

But on the thirty-sixth day, when he heard Joshua comment these words : *Praise to the Holy One, blessèd be He, who*

maketh His delight of the righteous in their instruction! the Prophet beheld in the cloud of glory the Presence of God whisper into the ear of him who had been his disciple, and dictate to him his words. And Moses understood them not. When Joshua had finished, he said to him who had been his master: "Son of Amram, repeat the lesson to the children of Israel." But the Prophet, having nothing understood, could not repeat it. Then he asked: "Joshua, our master, what, then, hath the Lord revealed to thee?" And Joshua answered him: "When He spake to thee face to face, didst thou tell me what He told thee?"

And then, understanding that his day was done, the Prophet groaned to God: "Lord, Lord, I would rather die than have understanding no longer, and only envy of them that have it!" And he prepared his soul for death.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE KISS OF GOD

It was the sixth day of the month of Adar. In the middle of the day a Voice sounded from the sky : " Moses, Moses ! There remaineth to thee but one day more to live in this world." " Wherefore is my death so near ? " groaned the Prophet. " Hast thou not twice asked to die ? " " Lord, Lord, Thou didst show me Thy might on Sinai, and Thy strength in the ten plagues of Egypt ; Thou didst show me Thy mercy in the day of the Golden Calf ; and Thy love by the manna in the wilderness. Let me still live to tell Thy glory ! "

And in the night the Prophet said fifteen hundred prayers, and in the night he recopied the Torah thirteen times upon scrolls of parchment, thinking : " ' The Torah is thy life, and the prolonging thereof.' Perhaps it will prolong mine."

But on the morning of the seventh day of Adar the Voice sounded in the sky : " Moses, Moses ! there remain to thee but six more hours to live." And Moses answered : " First let me bless Israel, then I will go to be gathered to my fathers."

Then he assembled the multitude and pronounced over them the blessing.

He spake over Reuben : " Let him be rewarded for saving Joseph, and not punished for defiling Bilhah ; let there come forth from him heroes, heroes of might and of the Torah."

He spake over Judah : " Let him be rewarded that he

spake for Benjamin, and not punished that he polluted Tamar. From him let there come forth kings of war, and from him let there come forth kings of peace."

He spake over Levi : " He massacred the Shechemites, but he adored not the Golden Calf ; he was over-eager to avenge Dinah, but at Shittim his eagerness avenged the Lord. Let priests without blemish come forth from him, and from him the forgiveness of the Eternal."

He called down upon Joseph abundance of dews, upon Zebulun abundance of purple and of gold ; to Dan and to Gad and to Issachar he promised increase of flocks, to Naphtali fish, to Asher olives, and to all, the joy of the worship of the Lord. But to Simeon he promised naught, for Simeon had sinned with the daughters of Moab.

Our Rabbis tell us that, although Moses was not the first to bless on earth, his blessing was the most fruitful ; for Noah blessed Shem, his son, but cursed Ham ; Isaac blessed his two sons, Esau and Jacob, but his blessing divided them ; Jacob blessed his twelve sons, but in his blessing he chided Reuben ; while Moses, since he was unable to bless Simeon, did not name him—in order not to curse him. Wherefore his blessing was perfect.

When he had ended, the Voice from heaven sounded : " Moses, Moses ! there remain to thee but four hours to live in this world." And the Prophet entreated : " Lord, Lord, let me take leave of Israel, then I will go to be gathered to my fathers." And he read to the tribes the whole Torah, and he gave a copy to each of the tribes saying : " Keep ye the Torah, and may it keep you ! And let no word, no sign be changed until the end of the ages, that ye may live unto the end of the ages." All cried : " We will keep it until the end of the ages, so may it keep us ! " And the thirteenth Torah that Moses had copied was taken by the angel Gabriel, to bear it back to heaven.

Then the Prophet said : " Often I chided you because of the Torah : forgive me." All answered : " Often we angered thee for thy Torah : forgive us." And they forgave him, and he forgave them. Then he said again : " When ye shall have entered into the land of Israel, remember my bones that shall think of you. And say : ' Alas, alas ! the son of Amram, who ran before us like a steed, he hath fallen, he hath fallen in the wilderness ! ' " And all groaned : " Moses, Moses our master, what shall we do without thee ? " He answered : " God remaineth with you. It was not for me, but for you, that through me He wrought His wonders. Put not your trust in man of flesh and blood. Ye perceive that he is naught, for death taketh him. The Lord shall send you other prophets : listen to them, follow them ; but if ever one of them say to you that he is God, believe him not, for God alone is God." And all cried : " Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One." Then the Prophet turned to Joshua and asked him : " Desirest thou some further light upon the Torah ? For I go ; thou shalt not see me more." " Moses, our master," answered Joshua, " have I ever left thee for a single moment since I have been thy disciple ? Hast thou not, night and day, explained to me the Torah ? I asked thee everything : thou didst tell me all." " Since thou hast no request more to make to me, let me make one to thee. Embrace me." And Moses embraced Joshua twice, and twice he blessed him, saying : " Let peace be upon thee and upon Israel ! "

And as he blessed him the Voice sounded from the sky : " Moses, Moses ! there remain to thee but two hours to live in this world. Go up alone into Nebo, and die in light."

Why, ask our Rabbis, did God wish that Moses should die alone ? Because Moses' grave was to remain unknown ; for, if mankind had known the place, they would have worshipped his tomb as an idol, and Moses as a god. And

why, ask our Rabbis, did God wish that Moses should die in light? It was because, if he had died in darkness, mankind would have said: "God was able to take him from us because it was night. In the full light of day we would have taken him back."

But the Prophet still delayed, held in the arms of his mother and his sons and his wife. Again the Voice sounded: "Moses, Moses! go up into the mountain; there remaineth to thee but one more hour to live!" Then he rent his mantle, he covered his head with dust, and said: "Happy the people of Israel that is not ever to die! Farewell my brethren, my sons; we shall meet again in another world." And as all rent their garments, and fell groaning with their faces in the dust, he went up alone into the mountain, wailing aloud.

No man, say our Sages, dieth before his day. But, however late he die, he dieth always too soon for his desire. For the Prophet, having twice asked for death, and knowing from the mouth of God Himself that he had but one more hour to live, would not yet accept death.

Abandoned by men, he now entreated the mountain and the wilderness, heaven and earth. Climbing up Nebo, he said to them amidst his sobs: "Entreat for me the pity of the Lord; may He save me from death!" But the mountain answered: "May He first have pity upon me. Hath He not written: *The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed*?" And heaven and earth replied: "May He first have pity upon us. Hath He not written: *The earth weareth old like a garment; the heavens dissolve like smoke*?" And the wilderness answered: *Each thing returneth unto its place; all was dust, to dust shall all return.*

And the Prophet groaned: "Whither go? Whom now entreat? Once a Pharaoh was my slave; I delivered a whole people of slaves; I ordained the Sabbath and the

Fast ; I decreed life and death ; the Torah took my name ; I commanded the whole world ; I changed the order of things. To the heaven that raineth down water I said : ' Send bread,' and manna fell. To the earth that maketh the bread to come up I said : ' Let water come up,' and water came. God Himself obeyed me. I said to Him : ' Rise up,' and He rose ; ' Stop,' and He stopped. I said to Him : ' Punish,' and He punished ; ' Forgive,' and He forgave. What am I now ? An old man that beseecheth, and to whom none hearken any more." " It is the law of all flesh, My son," God answered him. " Thou hast had thy day, now let another have his. Whose son art thou ? Amram's. And whose son was Amram ? Kohath's. And Kohath was the son of Levi, and all were the sons of Adam ; and all died like Adam. Wherefore shouldst thou not die ? "

" Lord, Lord," Moses implored Him, " since Thou canst do all things, canst Thou not also spare me death ? " " If thou didst not die in this world, My son, how wouldst thou live again in the other ? I have made ready for thee all the joys of Paradise ; on earth thou commandedst the sixty myriads of Israel ; in heaven thou shalt command the fifty-five myriads of the Righteous, who shall walk in the ways of My Torah. O Moses, thy days will pass, but thy life shall not pass. Thou shalt have no need of roof, or mantle, or bread for thine hunger, or oil for thine head, or sandals for thy feet, or sun or moon for thy seeing ; for I will shelter thee with My splendour, I will clothe thee in My splendour, I will feed thee upon My delights, I will bear thee upon the wings of My glory. And upon thy face shall shine a light, whose shadow only hath shone upon thy face on earth."

But Moses did not yet submit. Again he groaned : " King of the World, King of the World, if Thou permit not that I cross over Jordan, if Thou permit not that I behold the Promised Land, permit that I live, Lord, that I live and

behold the world ! And if Thou wilt not permit that I remain a man, let me live like a beast of the field, let me live like a fowl of the air, but let me live, let me live. O let me not die ! "

Thus did the Prophet implore ; and the mountains and the seas trembled ; the firmament and the abyss cried out in terror ; all the voices of the universe howled in anguish : " Is God, then, about to destroy the universe ? " For the prayer of Moses was like a sword to hew and rend the worlds, containing in its plaint the Ineffable Name that created the worlds. Then the Lord ordered all the angels to shut the gates of all prayers, so that the prayer of the Prophet should not be received ; and the angels sang : " Glory to the Holy One, blessèd be He ; who knoweth nor favour nor injustice, and maketh death equal for all mortal men."

Moses had now come to the top of the mountain. God said to him : " Wherefore tremblest thou, My son ? " " I am afraid." " Of what ? " " I am afraid of Samael ; I am afraid of death." " Look before thee."

Moses looked. And God said again : " Behold this land, beyond this river ; it is the land that I promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, when I sware : ' I will give it to your sons and the sons of your sons.' Thou shalt not enter into it, but thou mayest see it."

And as the Prophet looked, the Lord put into his eyes such power that he beheld the whole land from the Jordan to the sea, from Hermon to the wilderness, and every place in the land, from the portion of Naphtali to that of Simeon, from that of Reuben to that of Dan, from the vines of Carmel to the stones of Sodom, from the roses of Sharon to the pastures of Gilead. And as he looked, the Lord put into his eyes such force that he saw, not only every place, but every age in every place : Jericho falling at the blast of the trumpet ;

Samson bearing the gates of Gaza to the hills of Hebron ; Deborah on Mount Tabor raining down stars upon the armies of Sisera ; Samuel at Ramoth anointing with oil the head of Saul ; David gathering in the brook Elah flint-stones to slay a giant ; Solomon leading the Ark of Sinai into the Temple of Moriah amidst the singing of songs. And the Prophet murmured in the joy of his heart : " Lord, Lord, Thou keepest Thy promise, and Thy children keep theirs. Thou hast led them into the land of Thy choice ; and thither have they led Thee, there to dwell."

But after the victories he saw the defeats ; after the sins, the chastisements : Ahab and Jezabel prostituting themselves to the idols in the high places of Samaria ; Manasseh commanding a prophet's body to be sawn through on the trunk of a terebinth ; Ahaz laying down his bed of stupration in the Holy of Holies beneath the wings of the Cherubim ; Jehoiakim in the Valley of Topheth feeding the flesh of his son into the flaming belly of Baal. Then there came upon them in the noise of their hosts, Nebuchadnezzar with his mitred horsemen and his hairy lancers and his sinewy archers ; and Titus with his Romans, his Syrians, his Arabians, his Getæ, bearing the sling and the spear and the pike and the onager and the catapult, extinguishing in blood the seven stars of the Candlestick, and dragging into exile the groaning remnant of the twelve tribes.

And Moses, in the anguish of his heart, groaned : " Alas, my sons ! What do ye ? Whither go ye ? Ye are driven on the roads like cattle, with rings of brass through your nostrils ! Ye are dragged in chains, and behind you the son of Edom lifteth up his head in blithe rejoicing ! Ye are tracked down barefoot and with bleeding hands through the valleys and through the mountains, beneath the sun and beneath the storm, without a home, without a land, without rest ! O Judah, O Gad, O Benjamin, O Ephraim, ye hunger, and have no more manna, ye thirst and have

no wells ! And ye wander, and no more have to lead you a pillar of cloud by day nor a pillar of fire by night ! Lord, Lord, canst Thou suffer the shame wherein Thou hast put them ? Why deliver them from bondage, and open for them twelve pathways through the sea, and change the sand into gardens, and the rock into fountains, and light up Thy mountain, and from it proclaim Thy Law to Thy people, but to blot out Thyself by blotting them from the world ? "

But, lo, beneath the eyes of the Prophet, filling all space, a gigantic Temple ! Its courts were of onyx and of beryl, its gateways of jasper and of sardonyx, its beams of emerald, its roofs of topaz, its columns of agate, of chrysolite and of amethyst, its altar of ruby, of carbuncle, and of sapphire. And before the Temple waited the Messiah.

And Moses whispered : " Is that the Temple of heaven, or is it the Temple of earth ? " " Moses, My father," the Messiah answered him, " this Temple that thou seest is neither of earth nor of heaven ; it is the Temple of heaven that the earth shall build." As He spoke, all the seas opened, and by all the pathways of all the seas, all the peoples redeemed from sin, went up toward the Temple, waving palms and singing songs ; and, after all the peoples, all the dead of all the ages and of all lands, returned from the Garden of Eden or from Gehenna, waving palms and singing psalms. And before the peoples walked Israel, singing psalms and waving palms. And the Messiah said to the Prophet : " Moses, My father, how couldst thou have entered into the Land of Promise ? It is not only beyond Jordan, the country that thou didst seek, it is beyond love, beyond hope. Behold, it is the whole Earth of whole Man." And as He spoke in the vast Temple, a vast table rose up over all the mountains and all the plains, over all the continents and all the seas. Round the table all the peoples were seated, and for the last Passover, Adam poured them

out wine pressed from the grapes of all vineyards, and portioned to them bread harvested from the corn of all fields. And all celebrated the last Passover, and sang with Adam and with Israel and with the Messiah : " Hosanna ! Hosanna ! The Days have come full circle ! God is One ! Man is One ! Peace to man in heaven, peace on earth to God ! "

And when, like the mists of a dream engulfed by night, the visions of the future were devoured by the midday sun, the Lord said to Moses : " I have ordained death for all mortals. For Israel alone have I ordained life, in order that man shall live, and that there shall live the Messiah. If thou desire it, I can change My decree : thou shalt not die, but Israel shall perish. Thy day shall be stayed, thou shalt be eternal, but the Messiah shall not be born." And Moses answered the Lord : " Thou art a God of mercy, King of the World ; let the Messiah come and let man live ; let Israel live and let me perish."

When the Holy One, blessèd be He, saw that the Prophet accepted death, He said to Gabriel : " Go, gather up his soul." But the archangel answered : " He hath led Thy people with Thy power in his hand, and Thy word in his mouth. He hath dried up the sea, shattered the Golden Calf ; I will not give death to this Righteous One." Then God said to Michael : " Go, gather up his soul." But the archangel answered : " He alone uttereth Thine Ineffable Name ; Thou hast made him more than an angel and almost a god. I will not give death to this Righteous One."

Now for a hundred and twenty years Samael had waited for Moses to be delivered up to him. He said to the Eternal : " I will go take his soul." The Eternal answered him : " Wouldst thou dare even to approach him ? What part of his sacred body could thy myriad eyes even look upon ?

His countenance? It hath beheld My countenance. His hand? It hath received the Torah from My hand. His feet? They have trod the threshold of My Splendour." "Nevertheless, I will go," Samael answered. He grasped his sword, girdled himself with cruelty, clothed himself in anger, and came before Moses. When he saw him, the Prophet, standing upon the summit of the mountain, traced in the air with his radiant fingers the four signs of the Unutterable Name; and, like a motionless lightning in translucent space, the Name remained suspended. Samael was hurled to earth and sought to flee like a wounded serpent. But Moses' knee was upon his throat, and already the angel of death was about to die when a Voice cried from the heaven: "Moses, My son, slay not death; the world hath need of him!" Samael fled, and the Eternal appeared.

He said to the Prophet: "Thinkest thou, My son, that I would have suffered to see thee die like other mortals? Lay thee down. Cross thy feet one above the other. Cross one above the other thine hands." Moses obeyed. "Shut thine eyes." He obeyed.

Then God, calling to Himself the Prophet's soul, murmured: "O My daughter, I ordained that thou shouldst dwell for an hundred and twenty years in the body of this man. Leave it now; the hour is come." But the soul replied: "King of the World, I know that Thou art God of all spirits, that Thou holdest in Thy hands the souls of the quick and the dead. Thou hast created me and Thou hast put me in the body of this Righteous One. Is there in the world a body as pure as his? I love it; I desire not to leave it." "My daughter," God answered, "falter not, obey Me. I will place thee in the highest heaven, beneath the Throne of My Glory, with My Cherubim and My Seraphim." "King of the World," said the soul, "Thine angels themselves

have become corrupted ; when Azza and Azael came down from the heights to couple with the daughters of men, Thou didst have to chain them betwixt earth and heaven for their chastisement. But Moses, from the moment that Thou gavest him to look upon Thee, face to face, his flesh hath no more known flesh. Wherefore I desire to remain with him."

" Dost thou, then, fear Samael ? " the Prophet asked his soul. " In no way : God will not deliver me to Samael." " Dost thou fear that thou wouldst have to weep my death as Israel will weep it ? " " In no way : the Lord hath delivered mine eyes from tears." " Fearest thou to be sent into the gulf of hell ? " " In no way : God hath promised me the joys of heaven." " Then go, my soul, whither the Lord summoneth thee, and bless with me His love."

The Eternal gathered up the soul from Moses' mouth, and the Prophet died in the kiss of God.

As soon as he was dead a cry resounded in the camp of the children of Israel, wailing : " Woe, woe ; he is dead ! " And on the next day the manna did not fall. Israel, that had wept Moses thirty days before losing him, made over him ninety days of lamentation. The earth also wept, wailing : " The Righteous hath left mankind." Heaven also wept, wailing : " Heaven hath left earth." The Eternal cried : " Moses, My son, thou hast said of Me, ' There is no other God in heaven or earth.' I say of thee : ' There shall be no other Moses in Israel ! ' " And God wept.

Now while all wept the son of Amram, his mother Jochebed would not believe in his death. She went to ask Sinai : " Sinai, Sinai, hast thou seen my son ? " " I have not seen him since he made the Torah come down upon me." She went to ask the wilderness : " Wilderness, wilderness, hast thou seen my son ? " " I have not seen him since

he made the manna come down upon me." The sea answered her : " I have not seen him since he changed my waves into dry land." The Nile answered her : " I have not seen him since he turned my waters into blood." And Jochebed journeyed through all the world, crying out : " Where is my son ? Where is my son ? "

And now the Prophet went up towards the Eternal. When Adam saw him, he said to him : " Wherefore goest thou higher than I ? Was I not created in the image of God ? " But a Voice sounded : " He is greater than thou ; thou didst lose the glory that thou receivedst of God ; what he received, he preserved." Noah said to him : " Wherefore goest thou higher than I ? Did I not escape from the Flood ? " The Voice sounded : " He is greater than thou ; thou savedst thyself alone, he hath saved his people." Abraham said to him : " Wherefore goest thou higher than I ? Did I not feed them that passed by ? " The Voice sounded : " Thou didst feed them in the inhabited places, he fed them in the wilderness." Isaac said to him : " Wherefore goest thou higher than I ? Did I not see upon the rock Moriah the Splendour of God ? " The Voice sounded : " Thou didst see it and thine eyes failed ; he saw it and his eyes behold it still." Jacob said to him : " Wherefore goest thou higher than I ? Did I not wrestle with the angel, and did I not vanquish him ? " And the Voice sounded : " He is greater than thou ; thou didst vanquish the angel upon earth ; he hath vanquished the angels in heaven."

Then Moses went up and seated himself beneath the Throne of Glory. And, seated beneath the Throne of Glory, the Prophet, with God, awaits the hour of the Messiah.